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THE EXPERIENCE OF EQUANIMITY EXPRESSED THROUGH ART: HOW ARTMAKING
FACILITATES THE PRACTICE OF EQUANIMITY

A DISSERTATION

submitted by

SEYMA CAVUSOGLU

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

LESLEY UNIVERSITY
September 15, 2020



Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences
Ph.D. in Expressive Therapies Program

DISSERTATION APPROVAL FORM

Student's Name: **Seyma Cavusoglu**

Dissertation Title: THE EXPERIENCE OF EQUANIMITY EXPRESSED
THROUGH ART: HOW ARTMAKING FACILITATES THE
PRACTICE OF EQUANIMITY

Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Dissertation Committee Chairperson: Mitchell Kossak, PhD 7/17/20

Internal Committee Member: Deb Spragg, PhD 7/17/20

External Committee Member: Patricia Allen, PhD 7/17/20

Director of PhD Program/External Examiner: Meenakshi Chhabra, PhD 7/17/20

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Mitchell Kossak, PhD

Dissertation Director

I hereby accept the recommendation of the Dissertation Committee and its Chairperson.


Sandra Walker, MBA

Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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The word to describe this moment in time is: *ethereal*. After following the questions I had in mind, I now realize that answers only create more questions. This dissertation journey became the water that nurtured the researcher in me. I hope to keep learning with and through art.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to explore the experience of equanimity expressed through art and its implications for the field of Expressive Therapies by examining the artmaking process of six participants (an illustrator, a visual artist, a musician, an art therapist, an expressive arts therapist, a clinical psychologist who is an art therapy practitioner). The participants were recruited based on their involvement in a contemplative practice that supported their practice of equanimity. The study utilized qualitative and arts-based research methods. Data were collected in the form of art (visual arts, poetry and music), interviews, journaling and artmaking by the researcher, and written feedback by the visitors at an exhibition held at the end of the interviews. The qualitative analysis yielded six themes: artmaking process as an experience of equanimity, openness to novelty, *oluruna bırak* – let it be, contemplating equanimity through artmaking tools that feel familiar and comfortable, equanimity is a choice, implications for Expressive Therapies. The findings showed how artmaking facilitated the understanding and lived experience of equanimity for the participants. The current study added to the literature as preliminary insight regarding the relationship between artmaking and the practice of equanimity.

Keywords: equanimity, mindfulness, openness, acceptance, interconnectedness, contemplation, artmaking.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The purpose of the current dissertation study was to explore the experience of equanimity expressed through art and its potential implications for the field of Expressive Therapies.

Equanimity is described in Buddhism as a balanced, non-judgmental, all-embracing stance preserved in all circumstances (Epstein, 2018; Maher & Cordova, 2019; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). The word equanimity is *upeksha* in Sanskrit and *upekkha* in Pali, and it contains prefixes that refer to *eye* and *see* (Boccio, 2018; Cheng & Tse, 2014; Desbordes et al., 2015; Hadash, Segev, Tanay, Goldstein & Bernstein, 2016; Kraus & Sears, 2009).

Desbordes et al. (2015) wrote about how the practice of equanimity helps individuals cultivate a “neutral feeling” (p. 357) which facilitates them to develop a worldview beyond their biases and personal preferences. According to Pagis (2015), the practice of equanimity generates a non-engaged stance which is the middle way between being too attached and dismissive. Hollan (1992), an anthropologist, observed the lives of Toraja people in Indonesia. Toraja people praise the practice of equanimity and describe it as “a graceful, smooth exterior, (...) a calm and controlled emotional or subjective interior” (p. 45). Other words that were used in the literature to depict equanimity were “reduced emotional activity” (Eberth, Sedlmeier & Schafer, 2019, p. 5), “nonreactivity” (Salzberg, 1995, p. 144), “even-mindedness” (Desbordes et al., 2015, p.357) and “impartiality” (McRae, 2013, p. 448). Thich Nhat Hanh (2015), a Buddhist dharma teacher, explained equanimity with a comparison to having more than one child. He stated:

People (...) sometimes think *upeksha* means indifference, but true equanimity is neither cold nor indifferent. If you have more than one child, they are all your children.

Upeksha does not mean that you don't love. You love in a way that all your children receive your love, without discrimination (p. 174).

Equanimity and Mindfulness

The cultivation of equanimity has been closely associated with meditation (Maher & Cordova, 2019; Pagis, 2015; Shaner et al., 2017) and mindfulness (Eberth, Sedlmeier, & Schafer, 2019; Hadash et al, 2016; Shoham, Hadash, & Bernstein, 2018) in recent studies. Equanimity is often referred to in the study of mindfulness, because it is believed that mindfulness and equanimity have an intertwined relationship (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Zeng, Oei, Ye and Liu (2015) examined mindfulness scales available in the field of psychology and they analyzed how equanimity was conceptualized in each scale. They concluded that mindfulness and equanimity possessed similar patterns based on how they were conceptualized. Eberth, Sedlmeier and Schafer (2019) developed PROMISE, a model explaining the relationship between mindfulness and equanimity. They highlighted equanimity and insight as two outcomes of the practice of mindfulness.

Studies conducted in the field of Buddhist psychology began to display the effectiveness of mindfulness and equanimity in psychotherapy (Cheng, 2015; Cheng & Tse, 2014; Desbordes et al., 2015; Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2011; Lee et al., 2017; Roy, 2014; Shaner, Kelly, Rockwell & Curtis, 2017; Tsui, Chan & Tin, 2016). Cheng and Tse (2014) investigated how Buddhist practices such as equanimity might be employed in psychological counseling. They underlined equanimity as a facilitator in overcoming biases. Being less distracted by bias and expectations enables individuals to attune better with other people and respond in a neutral way (Astin & Keen, 2006; Christopher, 2018; McRae, 2013). The literature suggests that practices such as mindfulness and equanimity enhance the well-being of individuals (Cheng, 2015; Cheng

& Tse, 2014; Christopher, 2018; Desbordes et al., 2015; Eberth, Sedlmeier & Schafer, 2019; Gambrel, Burge, & Sude, 2020; Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011; Lee et al., 2017; Maher & Cordova, 2019; O'Brien & Likis-Werle, 2020; Roy, 2014; Shaner et al., 2017; Shoham, Hadash & Bernstein, 2018; Tsui, Chan & Tin, 2016).

Artmaking and the Practice of Equanimity

Artmaking has been studied as a contemplative path similar to meditation (Allen, 1995; Franklin, 2017; McNiff, 1992; Rappaport, 2014). Artmaking has an innate potential to help individuals uncover their felt sense and embodied knowledge (Dissanayake, 1988; Franklin, 2017; Rappaport, 2013). My interest here is in exploring if the practice of equanimity might benefit from this natural potential of artmaking to facilitate a deeper contemplation, just like it benefits from the meditative and mindfulness practices as aforementioned. Hence, the current dissertation study investigated the potential of artmaking in facilitating the expression and practice of equanimity and its implications for the field of Expressive Therapies.

Artmaking as a contemplative practice in my life. For over six years, I have been practicing a Buddhist path and dwelling on the practice of equanimity. Artmaking has been a faithful companion along the way. Especially painting and writing poetry while contemplating equanimity helped me uncover and concretize my “felt sense” (Rappaport, 2013, p. 97) regarding what the practice of equanimity entails. Sometimes I feel like it gets hard in life to find and maintain balance when faced with difficult emotions such as sadness, grief, anger or disappointment. In my Buddhist practice, it is encouraged to observe all feelings as equals and find a neutral perspective that is not tainted by emotional misperceptions or bias. In Buddhism, the neutral stance is about knowing that all is impermanent and it is closely related with the

practice of equanimity (Epstein, 2018; Hanh, 2015). Knowing that all shall pass and that I can find an inner, balanced stance beyond any emotional turmoil makes it easier for me to enjoy life and feel content with the current circumstances most of the time. In my quest to find and maintain the practice of equanimity – the balanced, neutral attitude –, artmaking creates a space in which I feel contained and free to dwell on any direction my mind, body and felt sense take me. Figures in paintings and words in poems become both the reflection and guide for my inner journey.

I have been mostly making acrylic and oil paintings and writing poetry in Turkish. Along with my doctoral studies at Lesley University, I have started to explore writing poetry in English which led to the publishing of my first poetry book, *Dışarıda - Out* (2019). The ability of artmaking to facilitate a more contained and balanced stance in my life helped me discover the courage to create in a language different than my native tongue, to be published and to put my voice out there. Part of it was about not being caught in fear of judgement or anxiety about being visible. The guidance of the artworks that I created strengthened my practice of equanimity which facilitated my ability to choose courage over fear and anxiety. Because I personally experienced the effectiveness of utilizing artmaking to deepen my understanding and lived experience of equanimity, I wanted to explore further what it was about artmaking that facilitated my experience of equanimity. Therefore, I conducted a pilot research study prior to the current dissertation study.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was an arts-based and qualitative exploration of the experience of equanimity expressed through art. The research question in the pilot study was, “What is the experience of equanimity through visual artmaking and poetry as informed by the Sufi

perspective?” Data were collected and analyzed via qualitative and arts-based research methods. The aim was to develop new understandings regarding the experience of equanimity. Arts (visual arts and poetry) were employed as research methods to attempt at capturing the sensate essence of equanimity.

I needed a point of reference to keep focused on the experience of equanimity while making art. Thus, I chose to focus on how the Mevlevi path perceived equanimity. The Mevlevi teaching is a Sufi order, established by Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), a Sufi mystic, poet and teacher, in Konya, Turkey (Helminski, 2017; Louffy & Berguno, 2005). I live in Istanbul, Turkey. So, the Mevlevi path is close to my heart and home. In addition, Rumi’s stance of welcoming all as they are and utilizing music and whirling as forms of meditation seemed like a good fit for the study of the relationship between equanimity and artmaking.

I contacted a Mevlevi person who accepted to meet with me and converse about how the Mevlevis view the practice of equanimity. The Mevlevi person has been in training on the Sufi path for almost 10 years. He has regularly participated in his Sufi master’s talks and has been leading his own talks for the last six years. I conducted four open-ended discussions with the Mevlevi person, and I painted and wrote poetry based on what emerged through the content of these interviews. I shared with the Mevlevi person each artwork that I had created in-between meetings. The images and descriptions in paintings and poetry facilitated conversations with the Mevlevi person about how to cultivate and maintain the practice of equanimity. Four themes emerged through the qualitative analysis of transcripts of open-ended discussions: description of equanimity with Sufi terms, hindrances to cultivating equanimity, facilitators to cultivating equanimity and reflections on paintings and poetry.

Description of equanimity with Sufi terms. Sufis use the term *nefs* to describe ego (Krokus, 2014; Louffy & Berguno, 2005). Ego is the illusional construct created by the mind to represent the concept of self and personal identity (Knabb & Welsh, 2009; Tyson & Pongruengphant, 2007; Van Gordon, Shonin, & Griffiths, 2017). Sufis strive to overcome *nefs* and move into a state beyond self-centeredness in which there is unity of all, referred to as *vahdet-i vücud* (Louffy & Berguno, 2005, p. 145). According to Turkish Language Society's online dictionary, *vücut* (*vücud* in old Turkish) means body and existence, and *vahdet* means oneness; hence *vahdet-i vücud* might be translated into English as *oneness of the body* or *oneness of existence*. The Mevlevi person emphasized that the path to equanimity encompasses the deepening of *vahdet-i vücud* which entails a deep awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings. When one lives with an awareness of *vahdet-i vücud*, one might witness all non-judgmentally and eventually discover infinite love for all forms of existence (Helminski, 2017; Vaughan-Lee, 2012). According to the Mevlevi person, contemplating and deepening what *vahdet-i vücud* encompasses helps one cultivate self-compassion and compassion for others, leading to a non-judgmental, balanced stance that is fundamental in the practice of equanimity.

Hindrances to cultivating equanimity. The Mevlevi person identified an inability to feel love, judgement, self-blaming, self-centeredness, anger and fear as obstacles to the practice of equanimity. He pointed out an inability to feel love as the origin of suffering. He stated that love is the essential ingredient of all beings and that we are all made of love. When asked about what creates an obstacle to feel love, he emphasized that judgement, especially a self-blaming attitude, hinders the flow of love. He stressed that the judgmental point of view creates a self-centered concern and preoccupation that makes it difficult to turn toward other beings and witness their existence. In that sense, self-centeredness is almost like the opposite of the

experience of equanimity. He explained that equanimity generates caring for life, whereas self-centeredness focuses solely on one's own expectations and leads to impatience.

The Mevlevi person talked about two feelings that present themselves when one is self-centered: anger and fear. He stated that not being able to discern the interconnectedness of all - *vahdet-i vücud* - makes one fall into the trap of thinking that one is separate and that one's expectations need to be prioritized. According to the Mevlevi person, this thought pattern, when not met, generates anger. Anger is destructive and disables the cultivation of equanimity.

The Mevlevi person said that fear also might become a hindrance to cultivating equanimity. When asked about where fear comes from, the Mevlevi person said: "Because we do not know what will happen in the future, the mind fears." He explained that when one believes that future can be controlled and fails to do so, fear shows up and starts to control one's decisions and behaviors. The Mevlevi person reminded me of the importance of thinking about the impermanence of life. He said that everything that lives is destined to fade and die and accepting the impermanent and uncontrollable nature of life generates gratitude and appreciation, leading to the practice of equanimity.

Facilitators to cultivating equanimity. The Mevlevi person emphasized awareness as a core component of cultivating equanimity. He said: "I try to maintain a high level of awareness, because the thing that we are not aware of takes over our life. That is why many mystics state that if there is awareness, the job shall get done." He also spoke about being present in the moment through awareness as the key to creating a harmonious existence. The Mevlevi person suggested love and compassion as remedies for self-centeredness and suffering in life. He underlined the importance of loving and developing compassion at all times, toward oneself and others, equally. He said:

How are we going to overcome anger? The answer is by loving ourselves. The thing we will do is to love ourselves and to be compassionate toward ourselves. Yes, being right or wrong might matter to our mind and being wrong might make us angry. But we are *Can* [The word *can* does not have a direct English translation, but it is close to the combination of *soul*, *spirit*, *essence* and *being*], we are precious, so let's not get angry, let's be compassionate, Allah wants us to be happy.

The Mevlevi person also highlighted sincerity by quoting Rumi's words: *Either be as you look or look as you are*. According to the Mevlevi person, these words summon sincerity and recommend a genuine, open and welcoming attitude, expanding into acceptance of all as they are.

Moreover, the Mevlevi person talked about the shift in one's perspective through reframing, as another facilitator for cultivating equanimity. Reframing is looking at the situation with a fresh perspective, with one that encompasses love, compassion and belief in God's will. He summarized the essence of reframing as: "According to Sufism, everything happens for a reason. And the ultimate reason is to invite love. One bad thing is an open invitation to a thousand good deeds." The Mevlevi person suggested that reframing helps individuals listen to their inner wisdom and develop equanimity.

Arts-based findings. After each meeting, I listened to the recording of the open-ended discussion twice: once for transcribing, then once for meditating purposes. I transcribed the data myself which also served as an opportunity to further focus on the content of discussions.

Structured meditations on recordings lasted from 15 to 20 min, but unstructured contemplative processes continued throughout the study. The discerned imagery was first recorded on paper as sketches. I spent four to five hours each week in the painting studio, with

the exception of vacation weeks. During studio hours, sketches were translated into oil paintings. Three paintings were created: two on canvas (sizes 24x16 and 20x20 inches) and one on unpolished wooden plaque (size 30x20 inches). I felt like art materials represented the pace and feeling of the process. For instance, oil paint drawings dried slowly and they needed multiple layers before being completed, just like the experience of equanimity revealing itself to me on a slow and layered pace. It took about three to four weeks for each painting to be completed and dried. Once completed, I took the painting home, hanging it on the wall of my study room, in order to be in daily contact with it. As I discerned the establishment of a bond with the painting, I engaged in inner dialogues with it. Creative dialogues mostly consisted of asking the painting “What needs to be conveyed?” or “What is the wisdom you wish me to know?” Sometimes inner dialogues lasted for days, until they were recorded on paper in the form of poetry. Five poems were created during the process. (see Appendix A for poems and images created in the pilot study)

Reflections on paintings and poetry created during the pilot study. The Mevlevi person suggested that the paintings and poetry created to contemplate equanimity during the pilot study conveyed feelings of love and compassion with a sincere attitude. He thought that the genuine stance represented in paintings and poems indicated the development of a deep awareness regarding life. In other words, they presented an understanding of oneness in a world of duality. The Mevlevi person talked about how Earth consisted of dualities such as good and bad, beautiful and ugly, serene and chaotic, ill and healthy. According to the Mevlevi person, remembering that despite duality, the essence of all is united and deepening one’s awareness regarding oneness vs. duality helps with the cultivation of equanimity. Nature, which was the most prominent theme in paintings and poetry, symbolizes oneness of all. The Mevlevi person

explained that because all serves a purpose in nature, nothing could be classified as good or bad, necessary or unnecessary. All are intertwined and in harmony in nature. Therefore, nature presents the interconnectedness of all - *vahdet-i vücud*-, teaching us about what the embodiment of equanimity looks like.

Paintings. The tree figure was present in all paintings. In one painting, the tree was standing underneath a meditating human figure, as if it became a sitting place for this person. The roots of the tree were mostly visible, hanging tight on the rocks and displayed on the surface of the Earth. In a later painting, the roots became less distinct, but still some parts of them were visible on top of the soil. The tree became bigger and the design of the branches presented a felt sense of eternity, because the crown of the tree was positioned that way. In the final painting, the tree turned into wood, burning, disappearing, while creating a fire. Sprouts emerged from the hearts of the figures in the final painting, representing new beginnings of a tree.

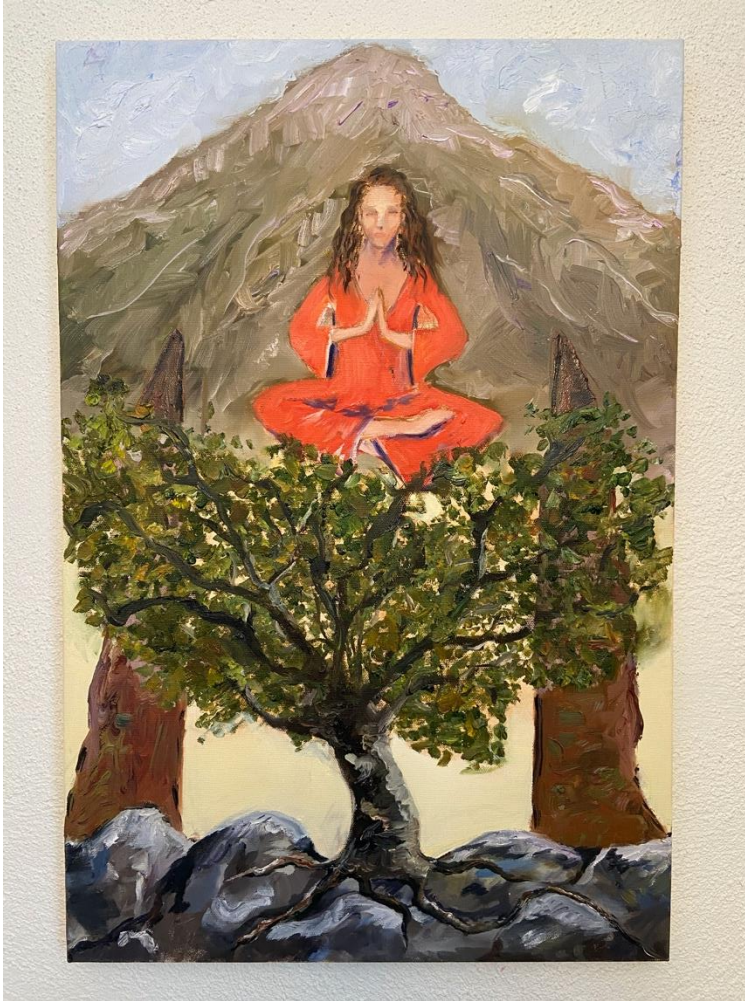


Figure 1. Painting 1 of the Pilot Study - ANDA - In The Moment, Canvas, Oil Painting, 24x16 inches

The journey of the tree throughout three paintings displayed the cycle of feeding from the roots, then growing into an eternal presence and finally dying, to be born again. The evolution of the tree figure in the paintings is reminiscent of how Sufis describe *marifet*, a state of heightened awareness. According to the Mevlevi person, *marifet* refers to a compassionate and non-judgmental acceptance of all, resonating with the experience of equanimity.

Additionally, the Mevlevi person interpreted the burning of wood in the last painting, as the symbol of the elimination of worldly attachments. When these attachments fade away, humans are awakened to the truth of the heart (Vaughan-Lee, 2012). The awakening from a self-

centered perspective and the ability to see beyond one's own attachments, habits, wishes and needs is a cornerstone in the cultivation of equanimity (Ekman et al., 2005).



Figure 2. Painting 3 of the Pilot Study - The Drop, Canvas, Oil Painting, 20x20 inches

Poetry. Five poems were written during the pilot study. The symbols from nature were also present in poems. The first poem, *The Eye*, mentioned fire, dawn and ocean. The second poem, *Such As It Is...*, talked about being in the woods and running through the meadow. The third poem, *Go Deep*, was a call to listen to the breath of the Earth through one's own breath and it emphasized oneness of all beings. The fourth poem, *The Eye of The Storm*, conveyed the message that being human might generate fear and need for power; however, nature, as it is the case in the eye of the storm, embodies calmness. The fifth poem, *Discrete Time*, depicted

infinite love through the metaphor of an ocean. Consequently, nature was the most prominent figure throughout the artistic exploration of equanimity in the pilot study.

The pilot study presented an artistic and qualitative exploration of the experience of equanimity expressed through painting and poetry as informed by the Mevlevi perspective. The pilot study process helped me explore how contemplating equanimity through artmaking became a source of information regarding what might facilitate my practice of equanimity. For example, the artworks that I created during the pilot research process helped me deepen my understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings which enhanced my practice of equanimity.

From Pilot to Dissertation

The pilot study and its findings provided me with an example of how artmaking might deepen my practice of equanimity. The potential benefit of artmaking to be utilized as a contemplative tool to deepen the practice of equanimity invigorated my curiosity to explore further the experience of equanimity expressed through art and its potential implications for the field of Creative Arts Therapies. This curiosity led me to the current dissertation study. Hence, the current dissertation study examined artmaking processes of artists and creative arts therapists to understand if engagement in artmaking facilitates a deeper understanding and lived experience of equanimity, if so how, and how a deeper understanding of equanimity might contribute to the field of Expressive Therapies.

Flow of the Current Dissertation

The second chapter, Literature Review, presents a broader outlook on how equanimity has been defined and studied in the context of Buddhist Psychology and in relation to meditation and mindfulness in the literature. In addition, the chapter includes how the field of Expressive Therapies approaches mindfulness and equanimity, and studies on mindfulness and Expressive

Therapies. For example, Rappaport (2014) and Franklin (2017) wrote about the potential benefits of mindfulness and equanimity in the field of Expressive Therapies. Moreover, there have been studies exploring the benefits of combining art therapy and the practice of mindfulness (Coholic, 2011; Coholic & Eys, 2016; Kalmanowitz & Ho, 2016; Monti et al., 2006; Peterson, 2014). Nevertheless, there is still a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between artmaking and the practice of equanimity. Therefore, the current study was designed to add to the literature as preliminary insight regarding the relationship between artmaking and the practice of equanimity, which might lead to the development of an equanimity-based approach in the field of Expressive Therapies.

The main research question for the dissertation is: What is the experience of equanimity expressed through art? The sub questions are: (1) Does engagement in artmaking facilitate a deeper understanding and lived experience of equanimity? If so, what is it about the artmaking that enables a deeper understanding and lived experience of equanimity? (2) How does a deeper understanding of equanimity contribute to the field of Expressive Therapies?

The third chapter, Methods, presents the design and methods of the current study. Six participants were recruited based on the selection criteria: regular engagement in artmaking and involvement in a contemplative practice that supported their practice of equanimity. Three of them were artists (an illustrator, a visual artist, a musician) and the other three were therapists (an art therapist, an expressive arts therapist, a clinical psychologist who is an art therapy practitioner). The study design incorporated qualitative and arts-based research methods. Data were collected in the form of art (visual arts, poetry and music), interviews with the participants, reflective journaling and artmaking by the researcher, and feedback forms written by the visitors at the final exhibition. Journaling, reflexive artmaking and member-checking the translations of

lyrics and poetry were utilized as triangulation methods to enhance the credibility of the study. Also, all interviews and artworks were recorded and documented.

The fourth chapter, Results, presents the qualitative and arts-based findings. The qualitative analysis yielded six themes: artmaking process as an experience of equanimity, openness to novelty while making art to contemplate equanimity, *oluruna birak* – let it be, contemplating equanimity through artmaking tools that feel familiar and comfortable, equanimity is a choice, implications of equanimity for Expressive Therapies (for therapists and clients). The arts-based findings include five paintings on canvas, two images created on paper, five painted t-shirts, one fabric-collage on canvas, a series of doodling on paper, one illustration, one ceramic figurine, three poems and two songs. Additionally, an informal exhibition was held at the end of the interviews and all participants invited guests to be witnesses of their artworks and offer feedback. It was interesting in terms of observing what the artworks created with an intention to contemplate equanimity evoked in the visitors. The feedback from guests of the final exhibition are presented in the Results chapter as well.

The fifth chapter, Discussion, encompasses reflections on themes and artworks in the context of the literature and implications of the findings for clinical practice in the field of Expressive Therapies. It also presents limitations and implications for future research. In conclusion, the current study addressed a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between artmaking and the practice of equanimity and explored its potential implications for the field of Expressive Therapies.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This dissertation attempted to explore the experience of equanimity expressed through art. The following literature review encompasses definitions of equanimity in Buddhism, Buddhist psychology and in relation to mindfulness and meditation, and how equanimity has been studied in the fields of psychotherapy and Expressive Arts Therapies. The word equanimity has mostly been described in the context of Buddhism (Eberth, Sedlmeier & Schafer, 2019; Wallace, 2011). There are studies conducted, especially in the field of Buddhist Psychology and mindfulness practices, to present evidence for the effectiveness of mindfulness and equanimity with regards to psychotherapy (Cheng, 2015; Cheng & Tse, 2014; Christopher, 2018; Desbordes et al., 2015; Eberth, Sedlmeier & Schafer, 2019; Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2011; Lee et al., 2017; Maher & Cordova, 2019; Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014; Roy, 2014; Rosch, 2007; Shaner et al., 2017; Shoham, Hadash & Bernstein, 2018; Tsui, Chan & Tin, 2016). This literature review aims to present an overview of aforementioned studies.

Defining Equanimity

Equanimity as Described in Buddhist Psychology

Equanimity is defined in Buddhist psychology literature as an unbiased stance preserved in each kind of experience, which leads to non-judgmental acceptance of all (Cheng, 2015; Desbordes et al., 2015; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Maher & Cordova, 2019; Makransky, 2008; Zeng, Li, Zhang & Liu, 2015). In the Buddhist tradition, the word equanimity, *upeksha* in Sanskrit and *upekkha* in Pali, contains prefixes that refer to *eye* and *see* (Boccio, 2018; Cheng & Tse, 2014; Desbordes et al., 2015; Hadash, Segev, Tanay, Goldstein & Bernstein, 2016; Hanh, 2015; Kraus & Sears, 2009). *Upa* means “over” and *iksh* means “to look” (Hanh, 2015). According to

Bodhi, once a person starts to live through the lens of equanimity, they experience a “neutral feeling” and their state of mind is not “swayed by biases and preferences” (as cited in Desbordes et al., 2015, p. 357). Equanimity leads to overcoming attachments created by the mind and discovering freedom which can lead to being generous and open-minded when interacting with each being in each circumstance (Eberth, Sedlmeier & Schafer, 2019; Cheng, 2015). Equanimity is also defined as “reduced emotional activity” (Eberth, Sedlmeier & Schafer, 2019, p. 5), “nonreactivity” (Salzberg, 1995, p. 144), “even-mindedness” (Desbordes et al., 2015, p.357), and “impartiality” (McRae, 2013, p. 448).

Anthropologist Hollan (1992) studied Toraja people in Indonesia. He observed and interviewed the Toraja regarding how they experienced emotion and what equanimity meant to them. The Toraja people live in South Sulawesi, mainly as farmers, and their traditional religion is called *Alukta*. They highly value the experience of equanimity, which they depicted as “a graceful, smooth exterior, (...) a calm and controlled emotional or subjective interior” (p. 45). Hollan explained that equanimity has been appreciated in Indonesian culture, especially because it was believed to protect people from disorder caused by impulsive behaviors.

Regarding meditation, Young (1994) described the method of Vipassana meditation as the practice of developing deep insight and a high level of attentiveness. The author also wrote about equanimity as one of the major components of Vipassana meditation and referred to it as “balance” (p. 54). Young depicted the practice of equanimity as attending non-judgmentally to what the senses and the mind discern and acting accordingly in a neutral and open way.

Moreover, when individuals practice equanimity, they need to differentiate letting go from being indifferent (Desbordes et al., 2015; Rosch, 2007; Salzberg, 1995). Rosch (2007) underlined “the necessity of letting go” (p. 262) as part of the protocols of “the mindfulness

incorporating therapies” (p. 262). Christopher (2018) described the letting go attitude as allowing “experience to move through us, trusting its meaningfulness and ultimate goodness, or at least necessity” (p. 12). Franklin (2000) added that being open to whatever surfaces in the moment helps one decrease their tendency to judge oneself and others. Boccio (2018) underlined that cultivating equanimity helps individuals maintain their inner serenity when faced with injustice in the world and be “motivated to make things better” (p. 25).

Because equanimity encompasses a gentle caring and sensitivity towards all sentient beings and the World, it necessitates a deeper understanding of the value of each experience (Wallace, 2011). According to McRae (2013), there are two stages of developing equanimity: the first is the practice of eliminating craving and aversion; and the second is the cultivation of love and gratitude. Hence, the experience of equanimity leads to letting go of self-centered needs and recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings (Astin & Keen, 2006; Christopher, 2018; Ekman et al., 2005; Rosch, 2007).

The Relationship Between Equanimity and Mindfulness

Equanimity is regularly mentioned in the context of *mindfulness*. It is helpful to investigate the nature of the relationship between these two constructs. The most prevalent definition of mindfulness is by Kabat-Zinn (1994): “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (p. 4). In Buddhist teachings, mindfulness refers to a person’s commitment to being fully present in each moment (Epstein, 2008; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Kang & Whittingham, 2010). It underscores one’s intention and ability to maintain a conscious awareness at all times (Desbordes et al., 2015; Franklin, 2000; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). The mindful attitude consists of attentive observation, silencing or diminishing self-talk, and inaction (Leary & Tate, 2007).

Eberth, Sedlmeier and Schafer (2019) developed PROMISE, a model explaining the relationship between mindfulness and equanimity. They highlighted equanimity and insight as two prominent outcomes of the practice of mindfulness. They emphasized that cultivation of equanimity through mindfulness led to increased well-being. Shoham, Hadash and Bernstein (2018) identified a similar relationship between mindfulness and equanimity. They showed that the practice of mindfulness led to an openness to experience and the decreased display of pleasure-based avoidance, which they identified as components of equanimity. Their studies will be presented in detail in the upcoming, Studies on Meditation, Mindfulness and Equanimity, section of this chapter. Additionally, the practice of equanimity enables awareness to be non-judgmental, which in turn deepens the practice of mindfulness (Desbordes et al., 2015; Franklin, 2000). Consequently, the practice of mindfulness is thought to be intertwined with the experience of equanimity, in helping individuals deepen their understanding of the World (Franklin, 2017; Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Equanimity in The Realm of Therapy

In the Western psychotherapy literature, the concept of equanimity started to be used in the beginning of 20th century as *aequanimitas* to refer to a “mental equilibrium” (Tsui, Chan, & Tin, 2016, p. 91) that generates a clinically unbiased and professional engagement with patients. According to Kravitz (2015), the development of equanimity can help clinicians guide their clients toward healing and achieving treatment goals, even when the clinicians encounter anxiety over the unknown. Accordingly, taking a non-judgmental approach in the face of events that provoke high levels of emotions can potentially create greater clarity (Eberth, Sedlmeier & Schafer, 2019; Franklin, 2000; Germer & Neff, 2013; Neff, 2003). Because the practice of mindfulness and equanimity is believed to ameliorate psychologically difficult experiences such

as anxiety (Christopher, 2018; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006), it is useful to further investigate the implications of mindfulness and equanimity in the therapeutic realm.

The Therapeutic Relationship and Equanimity

The practice of equanimity is “central to loving relationships” (McRae, 2013, p. 447) and “intimately linked to love” (Young, 1994, p. 55). Equanimity increases the feelings of intimate safety and self-compassion which lead to higher levels of relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships (Maher & Cordova, 2019). Maintaining an impartial attitude when relating to other people facilitates effective listening skills; hence potentially enhancing the quality of communication (Cheng & Tse, 2014; Epstein, 2018). When individuals are less distracted by their own bias and expectations, they can attune better to other people’s needs and respond to their statements in a more neutral way (Astin & Keen, 2006; Christopher, 2018; McRae, 2013). Eberth, Sedlmeier and Schafer (2019) underlined that the cultivation of equanimity helps individuals regulate and shorten their emotional reactivity.

Maher and Cordova (2019) identified three components of equanimity: “acting with awareness, non-judgment of inner experience and non-reactivity to inner experience” (p. 82). They underlined that the cultivation of these components might play a central role for establishing healthy relationships. Along the same lines, cultivating mindfulness and equanimity might enhance the therapeutic relationship and skills of clinicians (Cheng, 2015; Cheng & Tse, 2014; Davis & Hayes, 2011; Kravitz, 2015; Tsui, Chan, & Tin, 2016). Especially, equanimity might help therapists deepen their levels of empathy which has been identified as a core component of a strong therapeutic alliance (Dowell & Berman, 2013; Feller & Cottone, 2003; Jung, Wiesjahn, Rief, & Lincoln, 2015; Kaya, 2016; McClintock, Perlman, McCarrick, Anderson, & Himawan, 2017; Rogers, 1961; Yalom, 2002). Because a working alliance is

significantly related with positive outcomes in psychotherapy (Dunn, Morrison, & Bentall, 2006; Kiesler & Watkins, 1989; Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 1995; Stiles, Agnew-Davies, Hardy, Barkham, & Shapiro, 1998; Urbanoski, Kelly, Hoepfner, & Slaymaker, 2012; Weck, Richtberg, Jakob, Neng, & Höfling, 2015), any potential skill such as equanimity, that might make the therapeutic alliance stronger is worthy of further investigation.

Studies on Meditation, Mindfulness and Equanimity

Lee et al. (2017) underlined the usefulness of Buddhist perception and techniques in psychotherapy. Zeng, Oei, Ye and Liu (2015) wrote about mindfulness scales available in the literature. They analyzed how awareness and equanimity had been conceptualized in each scale. They concluded that, based on the conceptualizations, the experience of equanimity exhibited similar patterns as mindfulness, however it necessitated further investigation so that it could be utilized more in therapy. Practices such as mindfulness and equanimity promote the well-being of individuals (Cheng, 2015; Cheng & Tse, 2014; Christopher, 2018; Desbordes et al., 2015; Eberth, Sedlmeier & Schafer, 2019; Gambrel, Burge, & Sude, 2020; Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011; Lee et al., 2017; Maher & Cordova, 2019; O'Brien & Likis-Werle, 2020; Roy, 2014; Shaner et al., 2017; Shoham, Hadash & Bernstein, 2018; Tsui, Chan & Tin, 2016).

Cheng and Tse (2014) studied the implications of Buddhist methods on psychological counseling. The researchers conducted 46 semi-structured interviews with Buddhist practitioners, masters, volunteers and beneficiaries. Also, they recorded detailed field notes and utilized inter-rater analyses to enhance the accuracy of findings. Data were analyzed using the interpretative phenomenological method. The researchers conducted a detailed analysis of the responses, providing tables for each unit, which enhanced credibility of the research for the

reader. The study revealed 14 main themes including views of human nature, the *bodhisattva* spirit, qualities of a counselor, therapeutic relationship and skills. Buddhist scriptures related with each theme had been extensively researched and summarized in the article, hence providing more depth in terms of theoretical understanding of the findings. The theme of the bodhisattva spirit included the need for a deeper understanding of equanimity. Because the cultivation of equanimity enables one to overcome biases, and overt or latent tendency to discriminate, it has been referred to as one of the indispensable qualities of a Buddhism-oriented counselor (Cheng, 2015).

Shaner et al. (2017) studied the effects of meditation practice on daily life. They interviewed six women who were meditation practitioners for at least ten years, meditating a minimum of 20 min per day. The meditation practice involved silently focusing on one's breath and potential insight gained through the experience. The semi-structured interviews were all conducted by the researchers. They analyzed transcribed data using the interpretative phenomenological method. The qualitative approach added to the credibility of the research in conveying the lived experiences of meditation. Consequently, eight themes emerged: commitment to practice; communication with a teacher or mentor; self-awareness; development of equanimity, acceptance, and compassion; transcendental experiencing; feelings of spirituality; finding meaning in life; and impediments to practice. The researchers explained all themes comprehensively and they provided examples from the content of the interviews for each. All participants reported a deepening of their life's purpose and a higher level of well-being due to meditative practices. The findings indicated the usefulness of cultivating mindfulness and equanimity, through the practice of meditation, as agents of mental health.

Pagis (2015) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the cultivation of equanimity through the practice of Vipassana meditation. Pagis emphasized the importance of silent interaction among individuals as a way to develop equanimity. The author interviewed 60 retreat participants and practitioners of Vipassana in Israel ($n = 40$) and the United States ($n = 20$). The mean age was not provided, however the researcher stated that participants were older than 25 years, and 80% were younger than 40 years. All participants had attended at least a ten-day Vipassana meditation retreat and their daily meditation practice varied from two hours per day to 15 min several days per week. The researcher observed 10 silent retreats and conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 60 individuals. Pagis transcribed and analyzed data using deductive and inductive approaches. The results revealed a definition of equanimity: “non-engagement” situated between “full engagement” and “disengagement” (p. 39). The middle way of relating to other people with care and a healthy social distance is the unbiased and non-judgmental stance of equanimity. This attitude might also be informative when establishing an effective therapeutic alliance between therapist and client.

Kraus and Sears (2009) conducted a study to create a measurement scale for loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity. The researchers worked on the development of the Self-Other Four Immeasurables Scale based on Buddhist teachings. The participants consisted of 124 college students ($M_{age} = 21.11$ years, $SD = 5.83$; 52% female; 48% male) and 12 experienced meditators ($M_{age} = 45.67$ years, $SD = 13.43$; 10 females; 2 males), meditating for an average of 6.8 years ($SD = 5.5$). The results indicated four distinct subscales: “positive qualities toward self, positive qualities toward others, negative qualities toward self and negative qualities toward others” (p. 169). The authors reported a moderately strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .60$). Independent samples t -test was conducted to compare mean scores of non-meditator college

students and meditators. The results showed significant differences between non-meditators ($M = 3.75$, $SD = .60$) and meditators ($M = 3.32$, $SD = .86$) in terms of their positive qualities toward self ($t(2.22)$, $p < .05$), indicating the impact of meditation on positive self-regard. Another interesting point in the study was the adjective the researchers used to measure equanimity: “accepting” (p. 180), describing the attitude one adapts throughout the practice of equanimity.

Hadash et al. (2016) theorized the *decoupling model* of equanimity. The model described the experience of equanimity as the pursuit of differentiating between desire and pleasure. The decoupling model suggested that people could experience pleasure and displeasure without being attached to the acts of craving and rejecting. Additionally, Hadash et al. hypothesized that equanimity was cultivated through an intention to accept all experiences, and mindfulness regarding automatic responses when faced with a variety of circumstances. They conducted a study in Israel to test their hypotheses. There were 138 participants ($M_{age} = 31.4$ years, $SD = 10.9$; 65.1% female), and 53 individuals who were randomly assigned for the no-intervention control group. The researchers did not report the gender composition of the sample. All participants filled self-report measures of Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale, The White Bear Suppression Inventory, Distress Tolerance Scale, Anxiety Sensitivity Index-3, and The Leiden Index of Depression Sensitivity-Revised, before and after the mindfulness training that they attended. The control group also completed the same measures. They analyzed data using Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling in order to reveal the most meaningful relationship pattern between equanimity, thought suppression, distress tolerance, anxiety sensitivity, and reaction to negative feelings. The results presented the decoupling model of equanimity in which equanimity is the lead-factor influencing the four lower-level factors (thought suppression, distress tolerance, anxiety sensitivity, and reaction to negative feelings) as

the best fit. The researchers operationalized equanimity as one's acceptance of and non-reactivity towards unpleasant experiences. They suggested that future studies might focus on the attitude toward pleasant experiences.

Shoham, Hadash and Bernstein (2018) studied the relationship between the practice of mindfulness and the cultivation of equanimity. They conceptualized equanimity in two main components: "willingness to experience any thought or emotion, both pleasant and unpleasant" (p. 709) and "hedonic-based avoidance" (p.710). They adopted their conceptualization from the decoupling model of equanimity developed by Hadash et al. (2016). There were 82 participants ($M_{age} = 25.05$ years, $SD = 3.26$; 52% female; 92.7% Jewish; 2.4% Muslim; 1.2% Christian; 1.2% Druze; 2.4% other). Participants were assigned to a three-week long mindfulness training which comprised six structured, 90 min group trainings and three weekly, 30 min individual mindfulness sessions. The participants were instructed to maintain their mindfulness training at home, with three to four times a week, 15 to 25 min long practices. The trainers intentionally avoided discussions regarding equanimity during sessions. The authors conducted experience sampling measurements, consisting of 10 Likert scale questions measuring the participant's momentary experience. The experience sampling measures were administered both in-between and during the mindfulness trainings. The results indicated that mindfulness trainings helped participants cultivate openness to both pleasant and unpleasant experiences ($\beta = 2.53$, $SE = .05$, $t = 50.6$, $p < .0001$), and that after the third week of mindfulness training, participants displayed less hedonic-based avoidance ($\beta = -.39$, $SE = .14$, $t = -2.76$, $p = .006$). In other words, the practice of mindfulness facilitated the cultivation of equanimity.

Eberth, Sedlmeier and Schafer (2019) studied the impact of mindfulness meditation on daily life. There were 11 participants who were all meditators, with a practice of Zen, Vipassana

or Tibetan meditation. They were interviewed, by phone or face-to-face, regarding their meditation practice and its impact on their daily life. The qualitative analysis of the interviews was conducted through the MAXQDA software. Additionally, the authors studied the Nikayas, a collection of scriptures from Theravada Buddhism, in order to identify certain concepts that might be new to the Western literature, but could be utilized to enhance their model regarding meditation and its implications for daily life. Consequently, they developed the PROMISE model based on the analysis and the study of the teachings. The model consisted of five stages (from the beginning to the latest stage): (1) components of meditative practice; (2) mental actions cultivated through the mindfulness meditation; (3) skills that are developed by practicing these mental actions in daily life; (4) changes in emotions and beliefs; (5) impact on daily life. Equanimity and insight, the components of the fourth stage, were underlined as two major shifts that occurred in emotional and mental states of the participants as the result of practicing mindfulness meditation. The authors offered a definition of equanimity based on the interviews: “reduced frequency and duration of emotional reactions, such as boredom, self-blame, anxiety, guilt, greed, envy and many more” (p. 5). The authors included excerpts from the Buddhist scriptures, solidifying their findings.

Additionally, Eberth, Sedlmeier and Schafer (2019) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the PROMISE model further. They sent out online surveys to various meditation groups, and 102 people ($M_{age} = 48$ years, $SD = 12.7$; 55% female; 51% with university degree; 94% native German speakers) participated in the study. All participants were practicing a form of Buddhist meditation. There was also a control group ($n = 152$), consisting of non-meditators. The authors measured the frequency of intense emotions such as irritation, disappointment, sadness and anger, in order to identify participants’ levels of equanimity, using a measurement,

with strong internal consistency ($\alpha_{\text{meditators}} = .85$; $\alpha_{\text{non-meditators}} = .80$), created in a previous study. Independent samples t -test was conducted to compare mean scores of the study group and the control group. The results indicated lower levels of emotional reactivity among meditators ($M = 1.45$, $SD = .77$) compared to non-meditators ($M = 2.27$, $SD = .81$), which implied that the practice of meditation promoted higher levels of equanimity ($t(8.04)$, $p < .001$).

Maier and Cordova (2019) studied the relationship among sustained meditation practice, equanimity and relationship satisfaction through intimate safety and self-compassion in romantic couples. The authors conceptualized intimate safety as “a feeling of security and comfort even in the face of sensitive disclosures to one’s partner” (p. 78), and self-compassion as involving three components: “kindness to self, common humanity and mindfulness” (p. 79). There were 185 participants (57.8% female; 89.7% White; 9% Black/African American; 4.3% Hispanic/Latino/a; 2.6% Asian; 2.6% identified as other) who were regular meditators, and 29 same-sex or heterosexual couples ($M_{\text{relationship length}} = 13.5$ years, 54.5% had children). They accepted the couple to the study when one of them was a regular meditator. They measured the sustainability of their meditation practice by frequency of weekly sessions, duration of each practice, years of engagement, and days spent on meditation retreats. The researchers used 39-item Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire to measure the levels of “acting with awareness ($\alpha = .89$), nonjudging of inner experience ($\alpha = .93$), and nonreactivity to inner experience ($\alpha = .88$)” (p. 81) which they treated as three components of a single variable that they eventually called *equanimity*. The results indicated a significant, indirect relationship between the practice of equanimity and the relationship satisfaction, facilitated by the feeling of intimate safety (indirect effect = 21.92, Sobel test = 2.60, $p = .009$, 95% CI [1.16, 10.32]). In other words, when a person experiences intimate safety in their romantic relationship, their practice of equanimity gets stronger, which in

turn affects positively their partner's relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the authors found a significant, positive correlation between meditation practice and equanimity ($p < .001$, $r = .61$), and equanimity and self-compassion ($p < .001$, $r = .83$).

Tsui, Chan and Tin (2016) studied the impact of equanimity on the experiences of health-care professionals working in perinatal grief support in Hong Kong. The authors wanted to investigate specifically the relationship of equanimity with perceived self-competence and professional quality of life. There were 101 mental health professionals (social workers, clinical psychologists, pastors and counselors) who participated ($M_{age} = 40.85$ years, $SD = 9.66$; 94.1% female). All participants had been working with patients facing stillbirth or miscarriage during the year prior to the study. They were all invited to attend a two-day seminar on working with bereavement, and they completed self-report measures on professional quality of life, equanimity and perceived self-competence. All the measures consisted of items created by the researchers, and any validity or reliability studies were not reported. The scores of the level of equanimity were grouped using the mean split method ($M = 92.4$, $SD = 41.4$) in order to analyze the impact of equanimity on perceived self-competence and professional quality of life, via variance analysis. The results revealed that high level of equanimity accounted for 42.4% of the variance in perceived self-competence, and 49.6% of the variance in professional quality of life. The statistical analysis had not been explained clearly. Even though the authors used various tables, the layout was not reader-friendly. Because the outcomes showed that the level of equanimity played a role in moderating perceived self-competence and professional quality of life, the authors concluded by underlining the positive implications of promoting equanimity among mental health professionals.

The Relationship Between Mindfulness, Equanimity and Expressive Therapies

Buddhist traditions, meditation practices and the studies on Vipassana meditation depict the practice of equanimity as the non-judgmental observation of bodily sensations evoked during contemplative states; they also underline the body as a vehicle to cultivate mindfulness and equanimity (Christopher, 2018; Franklin, 2017; Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Pagis, 2009; Zeng, Oei, Ye & Liu, 2015). Expressive Arts Therapies provide individuals with an outlet to express their non-verbal, bodily sensations by helping them “explicate their felt sense – or embodied knowing” (Rappaport, 2013, p. 97). Accordingly, artmaking might deepen their understanding and experience of mindfulness and equanimity (Allen, 2014; Christopher, 2018; Franklin, 2010; Kopytin & Rugh, 2017). For instance, Owens (2017) wrote about how she meditated on the Psalms in words and images, created a mandala image afterwards and wrote a poetic response to her experience. She stated that the artistic exploration enhanced her spiritual experience, and that she had “a feeling of re-connection with the creative process” (p.229).

Studies on Mindfulness and Art Therapy

Monti et al. (2006) studied the effectiveness of a Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy (MBAT) program for women with cancer. There were 111 participants ($M_{age} = 53.6$ years, $SD = 11.5$; 75% Caucasian; 21% African-American; 2% Asian; 2% Hispanic; 1% other) in the study, with various cancer diagnoses. The researchers randomly assigned participants to either a control (waitlist) group or an intervention group. The ones who were in the wait-list group also joined MBAT at the end of the eight-week long program that the intervention group attended. The curriculum for groups consisted of mindfulness meditation practices such as body scanning, yoga, sitting and walking meditation techniques, and art therapy activities that focused on exploring present-moment experiences. The participants completed the Symptoms Checklist

Revised (SCL-90-R), which assessed psychological distress and stress-related somatic symptoms, as a pre- and post-intervention measurement. The findings were calculated by taking the square-root of the pre and post scores. The authors stated that they transformed data in order to approximate the distribution of residuals to a normal distribution. The results of the Wilcoxon rank sum test revealed a significant reduction of stress symptoms for each group. The intervention group's mean score ($M = .93$) dropped significantly ($M = .73, p < .001$). The control group's mean score ($M = .85$) also decreased significantly ($M = .81, p < .001$) as well. The standard deviations for the square-root calculations were not provided. The decrease in the mean scores of the stress levels of the participants indicated that combining mindfulness and art therapy techniques helped individuals feel less stressed.

Kalmanowitz and Ho (2016) studied the impact of art therapy and mindfulness-meditation techniques on building resilience for survivors of political violence in Hong Kong. The participants ($n = 12$) did not have a formal diagnosis of PTSD, but they were refugees and asylum seekers who experienced trauma and losses. They attended four full days of art therapy and mindfulness workshops over a period of nine days. The researchers did not report the length of each session. Participants created artworks, practiced mindfulness meditation techniques, and did homework. At the end of the last workshop, researchers conducted interviews with all participants, asking them about their experiences in groups. Data were collected as art works, records of non-verbal behaviors, semi-structured interviews, group discussions, reflective writing, written evaluations and focus groups. The researchers used the interpretative phenomenological analysis method. They adopted a social constructivist approach to identify seven themes, grouped into two major categories: personal elements (memory and identity), and mediating aspects (self-regulation, communication, imagination, resilience and worldview).

Participants reported that the creative workshop experiences, combined with mindfulness techniques, helped them cope with adversities and develop a sense of connectedness, empowerment and self-worth.

Coholic (2011) developed a six-week mindfulness-based art therapy group program to improve resilience in children and youth. Fifty children, who were either involved with child protective or mental health services, attended groups as cohorts over three and a half years. Participation was voluntary, and groups were formed based on gender and age. The research was designed based on a grounded theory approach. Thirty-one children and 18 of their caregivers were interviewed two weeks after the end of the program, and all interviews were video-recorded, transcribed and encoded using the qualitative data analysis program NVivo 8. The findings revealed two main themes: having fun together and becoming better at sharing feelings. The combination of mindfulness and art therapy activities expanded children's ability to identify and express feelings.

Coholic and Eys (2016) extended the aforementioned mindfulness-based art therapy program into a 12-weeks intervention and conducted another study to assess its effectiveness. There were three groups of children in the intervention program: the first cohort attended the 12-week program immediately, the second cohort first participated in an arts and crafts workshop prior to attending the program, and the third cohort waited until the end of the second cohort's program before participating in the mindfulness-based art therapy groups. The researchers hypothesized that children would improve in resilience and self-concept as a result of the intervention. They collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents were administered to 77 children ($M_{\text{age in years}} = 10.34$) before and after the program. In MANOVA analyses, time was the

independent variable; self-concept and three subcategories of resilience (mastery, relatedness and reactivity) were identified as dependent variables. Only self-concept improved significantly ($F(1,62) = 5.86, p = .01$). Also, interpretive thematic qualitative analysis, used to code semi-structured, individual interviews done with 47 children ($M_{\text{age in years}} = 10.38$), revealed two major themes: having fun and improved skills. The fun aspect is consistent with the previous findings (Coholic, 2011). The second theme of improved skills consisted of enhanced emotion regulation, coping and social skills, self-confidence, empathy and focus. The qualitative findings were in line with the improved level of self-concept. Findings might suggest that an increased level of awareness regarding self-concept, how one defines oneself, facilitated the development of emotional and social skills. Consequently, this study underscored the impact of combining mindfulness and art therapy techniques to develop and strengthen skills in children.

Peterson (2014) developed a mindfulness-based art therapy (MBAT) program called “Walkabout: Looking in, Looking out” (p. 64). MBAT curriculum combined mindfulness exercises and meditative walks, with photography and collage making. The aim of the program was to help individuals with cancer to come to terms with their illness and to learn embracing the present moment mindfully. Peterson (2015) portrayed the impact of MBAT program by presenting one of the participants in a case study; that person’s experience highlighted “the calming effects from art and meditation” (p. 80). Consequently, it could be suggested that the practice of mindfulness and equanimity, combined with expressive arts therapy techniques might enhance the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions (Allen, 2014; Franklin, 2010; Meghani et al., 2018; Rappaport, 2013; Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014). Further studies are necessary in order to determine how the practice of equanimity and Expressive Arts Therapies might be combined.

Conclusion

The literature review presented several definitions of equanimity and studies exploring the relationship between Buddhist psychology, meditation, mindfulness and equanimity. There are also several studies on the effectiveness of combining mindfulness techniques and expressive therapies. In addition, there are scholars who underlined that equanimity might benefit the field of creative arts therapies (Franklin, 2017; Rappaport, 2014). However, there is a lack in the literature regarding the relationship between the practice of equanimity and expressive therapies. The current study aims at providing the literature information regarding how the practice of equanimity and artmaking might be related.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Design: Qualitative Analysis and Arts-Based Research

The main research question for the dissertation is: What is the experience of equanimity expressed through art? The sub questions are: Does engagement in artmaking facilitate a deeper understanding and lived experience of equanimity? If so, what is it about the artmaking that enables a deeper understanding and lived experience of equanimity? How does a deeper understanding of equanimity contribute to the field of Expressive Therapies? The aim was to explore the relationship, if there is any, between the cultivation of equanimity and artmaking. It was hoped that the findings might reveal useful information that would enrich the field of Expressive Therapies and facilitate the use of equanimity in the field of psychotherapy.

Interviewing techniques were employed to investigate the understanding and the lived experiences of the participants. Additionally, artmaking had been utilized by the participants as a contemplative tool to deepen their understanding and lived experience of equanimity. The researcher created reflective artworks and kept a research journal along with the participants' during the creative time period. The artworks created for the study by the participants and the researcher had been observed to gather further data regarding the potential relationship between artmaking and equanimity. The final exhibition at the end of the second interviews of the artworks provided an opportunity to be witnessed by invited visitors. Feedback forms filled in by the audience are included in the data. The methods chapter describes the qualitative and arts-based methodologies utilized and the specifics of the data collection procedures.

Qualitative analysis. The aim was to capture the understanding and lived experience of the participants regarding equanimity expressed through their artmaking. An in-depth inquiry of

each participant's perspective and experience, before and after their artmaking process, was necessary. The researcher conducted pre and post-artmaking interviews with all participants. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Kvale's meaning condensation method had been utilized to analyze the transcripts of the interviews. Kvale (1996) described meaning condensation as the "abridgement of the meanings expressed by the interviewees into shorter formulations" (p. 192). Meaning units categorized as themes provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Kapitan, 2010; Kvale, 2007). The qualitative analysis yielded six themes which are presented in detail in the results chapter.

Arts-based research. Allen (1995) suggested that drawing enables individuals to uncover the essence of things. According to Klorer (2014), art and expression via creative means help individuals pursue the discovery of self and the World in a novel way and develop new meanings regarding both. Using art to express experiences, feelings and points of view carries knowledge beyond verbal expressions (McNiff, 2011; McNiff, 2008; Moon, 2003; Rolling, 2013). In addition, art is generated through fundamental biological and behavioral tendencies (Dissanayeke, 1988; Halprin, 2002; McNiff, 1992; Rugh, 2017), and it is thought to inform individuals about their true nature and motives (Kopytin & Rugh, 2017; Malchiodi, 2012; Malchiodi, 2005; McNiff, 1998; Rappaport, 2009). Kapitan (2010) wrote that "art is heightened experience" (p. 164) and suggested that artmaking might serve to point out what one was unaware of or did not notice before. Accordingly, art is a useful tool in research (Allen, 1995; Franklin, 2012; Klorer, 2014; Leavy, 2015; McNiff, 1998; Rolling, 2013).

Arts-based research creates an expansion in the repertoire of data, which in turn might lead to a thorough knowledge regarding the topic under study (Leavy, 2015; McNiff, 2011). Especially, when the experience that the researcher aims at studying is imperceptibly inward,

arts-based research presents an opportunity to explore a deeper understanding of the inner dynamics of the individuals (Allen, 1995; Dissanayeke, 1988; Kalmanowitz, 2013; McNiff, 2014). Because cultivating equanimity requires one to turn inward and deepen introspection (Ekman, Davidson, Ricard, & Wallace, 2005; Makransky, 2008; McRae, 2013; Pagis, 2015; Wallace, 2011; Young, 1994), arts-based research might be helpful to capture and present internal processes involved in the experience of equanimity.

Data Collection

The research had been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Lesley University on January 23, 2019 (Appendix B). The research process consisted of interviews, a time period of creative immersion by each participant and the researcher and a final exhibition of artworks witnessed by invited guests. The interviews and the period of creative immersion lasted from January until June 2019. The final exhibition was conducted on June 16, 2019. The researcher kept a reflexive journal and created art along with the data gathering process, as an attempt to enhance the objectivity and credibility of the research. The researcher journaled on a regular basis to keep track of her inner experience via a self-reflexive stance. Leavy (2015) highlighted the importance of reflexivity in arts-based and qualitative research for “constantly examining [one’s] own position in the research endeavor, including [one’s] assumptions, feelings and decisions” (p. 282). Additionally, Nagata, Kohn-Wood and Suzuki (2012) stated that self-reflection and reflexivity help the researcher be mindful about potential biases and assumptions. Hence, self-reflective journaling might have strengthened the credibility of the dissertation.

There were six participants in the study: an illustrator, a visual artist, a musician, an art therapist, an expressive arts therapist, a clinical psychologist who is also an art therapy practitioner. The term *art therapy practitioner* is employed in the Turkish Expressive Therapies

community in order to identify colleagues who did not study Expressive Therapies at a sanctioned degree granting school but attended local certificate trainings. There are not any school degrees in the field of Expressive Therapies in Turkey. Therefore, the art therapist and the expressive arts therapist in the study both received their degrees abroad. Another point that might be helpful to mention is that in this research, the terms creative arts therapies and expressive therapies are used interchangeably to refer to all modalities. Moreover, all six participants identified as women and Turkish, living in Istanbul. The age range was from mid-30's to mid-50's. They have been working in their fields ranging from 5 to 35 years. In terms of sexual orientation, four of the participants identified as heterosexual, one participant identified as bisexual and one participant identified as lesbian.

Participants were recruited using the snowball technique. The researcher contacted an artist and an art therapist through mutual acquaintance and asked them for potential candidates who might be interested in participating in the research. The requirements for the participation were: regular engagement in artmaking and involvement in a contemplative practice that supported the cultivation of equanimity. The main reason for recruiting participants who regularly engaged in artmaking was to ensure their familiarity with artmaking. Participants who were familiar with artmaking might have been less concerned with technicalities, hence focusing more on the process.

Each participant signed two informed consents (one for participation, one for release of art) at the beginning of the first interview. The informed consent forms are presented in Appendix C. The interview questions and informed consents were prepared both in Turkish and English. The participant chose the language that they felt most comfortable with. All participants attended pre and post interviews and engaged in the creative process in-between

interviews. All interviews were semi-structured and conducted in-person either at the participant's or the researcher's office depending on the participant's preference. Interview questions are presented in Appendix D.

The pre interview started with an invitation to talk about and witness the participant's past artwork(s). The aim was to build a safe and intimate connection with the participant in order to support their creative exploration of equanimity. The first interview consisted of demographics, the perspective of the participant with regards to artmaking, and discussion regarding their understanding, experience and practice of equanimity. Additionally, each participant was asked to provide a written statement regarding their current experience of equanimity in relation to their artmaking. The format of the written statement was the same in the pre and post interviews and it is presented in Appendix E. The first interview with creative arts therapists also focused on their thoughts regarding the use of an equanimity-based approach in Expressive Therapies.

At the end of the first interview, participants were informed that there would be a check-in every seven to 10 days. They were encouraged to keep a journal throughout the creative time period and share excerpts during the check-in. The goal of inviting participants to keep a creative journal was to maintain their connection with the research process and support their artistic inquiry. Then, the participants were given one to four months (the creative time period) to contemplate, express and deepen their understanding and lived experience of equanimity through artmaking. The length of the creative time period depended on the participant's needs. Any art form and modality of expressive therapies was welcome in the study.

The researcher checked-in with each participant every seven to 10 days via text message or e-mail, depending on the participant's preference. The purpose of the check-in was to

maintain a stable connection with each participant in order to support their investigative period. During the check-in, the participant was asked the following questions: How is your exploration going? Is there anything you would like to share with the researcher? Is there anything the researcher can do to support your ongoing process? Would you like to share anything from your journal? Some of the participants shared certain parts of their creative process during their check-in which are presented in detail in the results chapter. Some of the participants preferred to remain unresponsive during their check-in. By the end of their creative time period, when the participant stated that they were done with their artwork(s), the researcher scheduled their second interview.

During the second interview, the researcher and the participant talked about the participant's experience of the creative time period, their perception of their recently created artwork(s), and how (if any) the artwork impacted their understanding and lived experience of equanimity. Additionally, participants were asked to provide their second written statement regarding their current experience of equanimity in relation to their artmaking. The second interview with creative arts therapists also covered their thoughts about how their recent experience of artmaking during the creative period might inform the field of Expressive Therapies.

All participants were given an alias for the purposes of confidentiality. The illustrator, Vanessa, participated in her first interview on February 19, 2019. She made an illustration during the creative time period. Her second interview was on June 5, 2019. The visual artist, Claudia, attended her first interview on February 25, 2019. She worked on a clay object during the creative process. Her second interview was on May 22, 2019. The musician, Michelle, participated in her first interview on May 5, 2019 and created two songs and two poems during

the creative time period. Her second interview was on June 14, 2019. The art therapist, Josephine, attended her first interview on January 29, 2019. She created a series of doodling and a layered collage on canvas made of linens. Her second interview was on May 5, 2019. The expressive arts therapist, Alice, participated in her first interview on February 5, 2019. She created an oil painting during the creative time period and also wanted to include a previously created art piece in the study. Alice presented two preliminary drawings on paper during her check-in and two oil paintings on her second interview on May 8, 2019. The clinical psychologist who is also an art therapy practitioner, Miranda, attended her first interview on April 2, 2019. She was invited to the study when another participant, a music therapist, stated that he could no longer participate in the study due to familial issues. Miranda painted five t-shirts and made two acrylic paintings on canvas. Her second interview was on May 21, 2019. Additionally, the researcher created a poem and an oil painting during the creative time period.

There was a final exhibition at the end of the second interviews. All participants, as well as the researcher decided to present their artworks. The informal exhibition took place in a small events arena in Istanbul. Each participant and the researcher invited three individuals to witness the exhibition and offer feedback. The formal invitation, along with the address and the map of the place, was created by the researcher and shared with the participants one week prior to the event. Five of the participants attended the exhibition in-person. One participant could not be there because of a family emergency and she was contacted via phone during the event. The exhibition lasted for two hours. There were nine visitors who offered feedback. They explored the artworks, enjoyed the food offered during the event and talked with the artists. The artists, depending on how much they wanted to share, talked about their artworks for two to five minutes by the end of the visitors' exploration. Afterwards, the visitors were invited to re-visit

the artworks if they chose so and to fill in the feedback forms pre-prepared by the researcher in Turkish. The forms are presented both in English and Turkish in Appendix F. The feedback forms were anonymous and they were not shared with the artists. The final exhibition was intended as an opportunity for all artworks to be presented at the same time, in the same physical space. It was thought that it could add another layer of data through witnessing of the audience. The visitors were asked to describe what the exhibition and artworks evoked in them based on what they had witnessed as visual arts and live performance of the songs. They were also asked to describe the entire exhibition in three words. The aim was to get a sense of how the witnesses experienced artworks related with equanimity. Details are presented in the results chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Results

In this dissertation, the experience of equanimity expressed through art and its implications for the field of Expressive Therapies had been studied. Data were collected in the form of interviews with three artists, one art therapist, one expressive arts therapist and one art therapy practitioner who is also a clinical psychologist, written forms, reflective art-making, journal entries, check-in text messages and e-mails, and feedback forms in the informal exhibition where all artworks were presented to visitors. This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative and arts-based analyses. The qualitative analysis yielded six themes which are presented in the first section. The arts-based research led to the creation of five paintings on canvas, two images created on paper, five painted t-shirts, one fabric-collage on canvas, a series of doodling on paper, one illustration, one ceramic figurine, three poems and two songs. They are all presented in the second section of the chapter along with reflections by the participants and feedback from visitors of the final exhibition.

Qualitative Analysis Findings

All interviews were conducted with Turkish participants; however, some chose to answer certain questions in English. When it is the case, it is mentioned after the quotation as (*as stated in English by the participant*); if not, all Turkish transcripts were translated into English by the researcher. The poems and lyrics of the songs from data were also translated by the researcher, but they were sent to the participant who requested that the researcher translate and send them to her for review.

Theme 1: artmaking process as an experience of equanimity. All participants described their process of artmaking as their way of experiencing equanimity. They stated that

they deepened their understanding of equanimity by reflecting on how the artwork was created. Their descriptions of the process of artmaking depicted a meditative state that enabled contemplation.

Vanessa drew an illustration during the creative process, and when asked about her process of artmaking, she described it as: “I do not know why I wrote that particular quote on that spot or why I drew that image. Everything happened in the moment. It was like all my focus was on the present.” She talked being surprised when she explored the details of her illustration after she was done with it. She underlined how she valued receiving illustrations as they were. She explained: “They become independent beings and I respect them.” Her description of equanimity in her first interview, “perceiving all as equal, including yourself,” resonated with the way she had been treating illustrated figures.

Claudia’s experience with the artmaking process was also an example of how equanimity helped her embrace what came out in the moment. She described her experience as:

It took some hard work to create this piece of art. The clay came out too soft for the height of the object that I wanted to create. Therefore, the clay melted down and I called my assistant to help me hold it up. But no matter how much effort we put in, the clay did not stand up as I wanted it to. So, I decided to let it be as it is, and that’s when I realized the new form that it could take, more like linen that folded. We supported the clay with books and vases until it was possible to put it in the oven. I was afraid to put it in the oven because I thought it might break down. Finally, I decided to go ahead with it. It came out okay, there was a minor crack on it. I had to mend it and put on the glaze. Back to the oven... To my surprise, I ended up creating something unexpectedly beautiful and I had fun in the process. I believe the process fits perfectly with how we

are supposed to receive and let it be while making the effort, when we practice equanimity.

Claudia's experience with the clay was reflected in her description of equanimity, when her definitions before and after art-making were compared. She used to describe equanimity as "being fair and harmonious." After her process of artmaking, she explained that her perception of equanimity broadened. She explained: "Equanimity is like acceptance, about everything. It is open-mindedness." The way Claudia journeyed with the clay and accepted its new form, led her to feel joy in the moment and to be in harmony with the outcome. This experience might have become an experiential process for her to redefine and maybe deepen her understanding of equanimity.

Michelle also described, in her first interview, a similar experience of equanimity while spoon-carving. She stated that the process of creating helped her be in a place where there is no thinking, hence no judgement. She said:

When I rub the spoon that I had just carved, all I think is how rubbing shapes the surface of the spoon. Afterwards, I think back and I realize that I was solely focused on the spoon's process. It was as if polishing it was synonymous with polishing my soul. It was as if carving helped me get closer to my essence. That is where equanimity resides.

Michelle's realization was projected in a poem she wrote during the creative process of the study.

Close enough

Far enough

You are already inside

For Josephine, artmaking was a process in which she explored interconnectedness among all figures that appeared on paper and canvas. She explained:

Another aspect of art that tells us about equanimity is how each color, each shape exists in one another. I speak in colors and images because I am a visual person. I believe I can find red everywhere or a circle everywhere. Hence, depicting equanimity... All colors and figures are equal because they exist in each other in some way.

Josephine said that she intuitively picked the art supplies she used. She felt close to fine-point markers, believing that they might help her deepen her understanding of equanimity. She described her experience of doodling with fine-point markers on small, white papers:

In the process of making this artwork, I kept on doing and doing, to the point where all my thoughts were gone. I wasn't thinking.... Is it good, am I doing it right, will it be beautiful enough to exhibit, why am I drawing this particular piece? I was merely focused on what I was doing. Suddenly I found myself feeling serene and peaceful. I guess that was equanimity.

Alice described an open and accepting attitude regarding the beginning of her artmaking process. She said:

Before I start painting, I observe all the colors on the palette. I see them all as the same, having the same value. There is trust in the moment, just like in the practice of equanimity. All is possible. All is acceptable.

Alice explained that when faced with a wide range of possibilities, many images appeared in her mind. She then picked one and started a more focused relationship with that image. She let it be as it wanted to occur on canvas. She said she might even "draw the same image multiple times if that is what the image needed." She defined her art-making process as

“intuitive, gestural and unintentional” which resonated with how other participants described an open attitude in their art-making process as an experience of equanimity.

Miranda also embraced an accepting and receiving attitude during the creative process.

She explained:

When I make art, I like to be spontaneous, doing without knowing what I am doing...

Sometimes I do not know which color to choose for the base of the canvas or I would mix colors randomly... I like to be surprised. This spontaneity brings along an acceptance of all that might appear while I am making art. This approach to artmaking is like equanimity in life. We do not know for sure what might or would happen in the next moment. Can we embrace all that occurs with acceptance? This is actually what makes life more exciting. A life without problems would not be beautiful. I need to go through ups and downs, and all kinds of emotions so that I feel like a whole person, like a part of nature.

As the researcher, I made reflective art and journaled during the creative time period.

The way I experienced artmaking while contemplating equanimity resonated with participants' descriptions of their accepting attitude and openness. I wrote in my journal on March 29th, 2019:

The middle way... Being non-engaged but exploring. Can we maintain this stance in life? Like spirals appearing on my painting... Out of the blue... Can I let it all come as they are meant to? And embrace all, whatever comes my way... Remaining tranquil...

When I was making an oil painting, I found myself drawing big spirals on canvas. They were the result of deep contemplations regarding the constant movement of Earth. However, they came unexpectedly and unplanned. As I drew them, they blurred the image I was working

on. At that moment, I chose to let it happen. The openness I felt in that experience was a crystallized moment of equanimity.

Theme 2: openness to novelty while making art to contemplate equanimity. Each participant encountered a new color, shape, form or style while they were making art. They all exerted an openness to novelty. They described their shift, from being surprised and resisting change, to accepting the new color or shape, as part of their practice of equanimity.

Vanessa talked about her welcoming stance while making art to deepen her understanding of equanimity. She stated that she had the felt sense of using soft colors that she had not used before. She said:

I have used soft colors which is surprisingly new to me. I usually go for black and white, or dark colors. This soft pink for instance, I thought I hated this color because of its association with being too girly, but it turns out I enjoyed seeing it on paper. And here it created a contrast; seeing the soft colors you expect a softer story, but it is about suicide and monsters. I welcome the illustration the way it comes.

In her second interview, Vanessa explained that she based her illustration on Virginia Woolf's suicide scene. She associated her death with the loss of a close friend and she wanted to explore through art-making whether it was possible to practice equanimity in the face of such a loss. She stated that exerting openness during her art-making helped her internalize an accepting attitude which made it easier for her to re-visit her grief. She said: "I admit that I still have a lot to work on. I still have a hard time with losing her. But I have a feeling, I am getting closer to make my peace with it."

For Claudia, openness to novelty was about accepting a new form of clay that emerged during the creative process, despite her efforts to "pull the clay up and reshape it." She admitted

that once she was able to receive the possibility of an unexpected form, she ended up enjoying the process. Her experience yielded a new perspective in her artmaking, which possibly translated into a life experience of embracing change as it occurs.

Michelle, a full-time musician and a part-time spoon carver, expressed her understanding of equanimity with two poems and two songs. She stated that the poems which she wrote during the creative process, were new to her, and that she had not written a poem in that style before.

She explained:

I am not sure why I wrote these poems; they are different than my usual style. I was so focused on the experience of equanimity while I was at a concert. There was fog on stage. And that is how the poem with the legs and the fog was born.

Even though Michelle thought the poems were new and different in form, she remained impartial and accepted them as representative of her experience of equanimity. Her attitude resonated with other participants' openness to new encounters during their artmaking process. Josephine described this experience in her second interview as: "Accepting where I am at, then maintaining my accepting attitude, growing it in me and remaining calm in that place."

Alice created two images on paper and two oil paintings on the canvas. According to her description, one of the oil paintings was what equanimity is to her. She described the images, colors and the light on the canvas as softer than her usual style. In her second interview, she stated: "While I was making this painting with softer colors, small brush strokes and smoother light, a shift has occurred in me... I can define it as a sense of faith. Faith that what will be will be. This thought pattern brought along flexibility. I think it resembles optimism (*as stated in English by the participant*)." She said that she might continue to explore the effects of soft colors and small brush strokes in the future. Her flexibility and openness to change her painting

style along the way helped her discover a new perspective which might be eventually transferred in her practice of equanimity in daily life.

Miranda's call for spontaneity, which was described in the previous theme, resonated with openness to novelty while making art to contemplate equanimity. Additionally, her biggest surprise that was facilitated by her openness to novelty was about the number of artworks she created. In her second interview, she said:

Having an intention, to contemplate on equanimity, while I make art, enriched my creative process. What I mean is, I created more pieces than I usually would in this amount of time. It was like figures were flowing through me, one after another. I was open to them. I guess associating equanimity with nature felt good, because I respect nature, I worship nature. So, I painted fruits, man, woman, animals... shapes... all from nature. I still need time to process how each figure relates to my experience of equanimity, but I know the process of creating them, receiving them was filled with equanimity.

As the researcher, I felt a similar openness to new experiences while studying equanimity. The research process itself was filled with new encounters such as meeting new people and witnessing participants' artworks as a researcher. As I wrote in my research journal on April 30th, 2019, "maintaining a practice of equanimity throughout the research process is helping me cultivate an open attitude and impartial curiosity."

Theme 3: oluruna bırak - let it be. All participants used varieties of a Turkish saying which goes "oluruna bırak." The word-by-word translation is "let it be." It has a connotation of leaving it up to fate, but because fate is closely associated with religion in the Turkish culture, people prefer to use "oluruna bırak" which is a more secular way of saying to accept the

circumstances or occurrences as they are. It might be more meaningful in English when translated as “accepting the flow.” All the participants encountered moments in their artmaking when they decided to accept the flow of events as they were and let what was happening be.

Vanessa talked about the plants and flowers on her illustration. She pointed out that she let them grow as she was drawing. Additionally, she stated that the illustrated plants mirrored her relationship to the plants at home. She explained:

I always had such a hard time nurturing plants. I thought I would never make a plant grow. But, you know what, surprisingly, it has been months that I haven’t killed a plant. There is this one plant at home, we get along well. I am learning that the plants talk too. I speak with this plant a lot. I think it helps. It might be about caring enough but also leaving the space for the plant to grow. That is similar to what I did in the illustration. I did not want the plants to cover the whole paper, but I let them be. They ended up here and there. I like seeing them on paper.

She underlined that her relationship with plants reminded her of the interconnectedness among all beings, and she added: “Letting each other be seems to play a role in the practice of equanimity.”

Claudia described her experience with the new form that the clay took while she was working on it: “I decided to let it be as it is, and that’s when I realized the new form which it was about to take.” She displayed flexibility which in turn helped her explore new styles in her artmaking. She underlined that art helped her adopt new perspectives by teaching her to let the process be. She said that she used to be “more stubborn” before she started to work on clay, and now that she has clay in her life, she is a much more “let it be person.”

Michelle stated that she had to embrace an attitude of let it be in order to experience and express equanimity through her songwriting. She explained that before this study, she felt creatively blocked in terms of her songwriting, but once she committed to deepen and practice equanimity through art-making, she was able to write two new songs during the creative time period. She described her experience of reconnecting with her songwriting in her second interview:

The phrase ‘let it be’ defines the very essence of equanimity. Once you trust whatever it is that you believe in, and you say: “Okay, I let it be, thank you”... But of course, you need to do your part, not just sitting back and doing nothing. That is not what I am saying. But once you truly let it be... that is the essence of equanimity. And then the creative force starts to flow.

As the researcher, I checked-in with each participant almost weekly. Josephine was one of the most respondent participants when it came to her check-in. In her second check-in, two weeks after she agreed to participate in the study, she stated:

I need to accept my process the way it is. I should have an evenness or serenity of mind regardless of my wrong answers and just trust the process that it will take me to the right place.

Josephine said in her second interview that the biggest challenge she had while deepening her understanding of equanimity through art-making was to accept all the changes that occurred on the canvas or the material that turned out to be different than she expected. Her experience of trusting the process was similar to what previous participants described with the phrase “let it be.”

When asked in her second interview about how the creative period was, Alice replied:

During my creative process, I observed my ability to let things be and develop, thanks to dwelling more deeply on equanimity. I live with strong inner and outer pressures. They are my hindrances to embodying equanimity. I have strong desires in life. But I try to shift from a pushy attitude to a more let it be stance. This let it be space is highly fertile in creativity terms (*as stated in English by the participant*).

Alice presented the let it be attitude as a part of her practice of cultivating equanimity through art-making. In her second interview, she described how she let images appear on canvas as much as they needed and how she chose colors intuitively to invite the creative flow in her art-making process. Moreover, Alice stated in her second interview:

In my spiritual practice, I work on letting it be which eventually leads to emotional openness (...) So, something about dropping my drive allows me to experience what I long for. This let it be attitude is about trusting the unknown (*as stated in English by the participant*).

Miranda described equanimity in her first written form as: “For me, equanimity is letting it be and trusting the flow.” Miranda’s description of equanimity in her first interview remained the same by her second interview, and it resonated strongly with other participants’ let it be attitude during their process of expressing equanimity through art-making.

Similarly, I had to embrace an attitude of let it be as the researcher. The research process itself was organized more easily when I committed to accept what happened as it was. For instance, one participant stated during the creative process that he was no longer able to participate in the research due to family issues. I decided to use this moment as an opportunity to practice equanimity. When I lost a participant, I started to contemplate where I could find another one. One day, very spontaneously, I came across someone from the Turkish Art Therapy

community that I had only met once briefly. I decided to ask her since she happened to be right there. To my surprise, she agreed to participate. I learned once more that a relaxed attitude such as let it be, helped me seize the opportunity. That day, I wrote to my journal:

She said yes! I thought she was so professionally senior than me, and expected her to be distant, but she was very polite and interested in the research. I guess when I let it be, something or someone brought her to my attention. So equanimity, what is it that you want to tell me? Is it that, we are all equals? Or that there is a reason for everything? How can I deepen my attitude of let it be? Just as is...

Theme 4: contemplating equanimity through artmaking tools that feel familiar and comfortable. All participants embarked on an artistic journey in order to pursue what equanimity meant and how they might experience it through creative means. They all reported on their second interviews that they preferred to work with art supplies and art forms that felt familiar and comfortable to them.

Vanessa drew an illustration during the creative period which was her favorite form of art. She stated that she used fountain pen and markers to draw and paint the illustration. She explained her choices in art supplies and art form as: “These are the materials that come easy to me.”

Claudia processed equanimity through ceramic making. She said: “I chose to work with ceramic because I live with ceramics these days. I go to sleep with and wake up to ceramics.”

Michelle created two poems and two songs during the artistic exploration period. She stated that she expressed herself better with these forms of art.

Josephine created a series of doodling with fine point markers on white cardboards. She explained on her second interview that she preferred these materials because they matched her

feelings at the moment. Moreover, she made an art piece on canvas using a variety of linens. She said: “It was as if my hand picked the materials itself. I have always loved working with linen. Canvas is a kind of linen too. It feels comfortable working with them.”

Alice drew two images on white paper with pastel crayons, and two paintings on canvas, using both oil paint and acrylic paint. When asked about the reason behind her choice of materials and art form, she said: “This is the material that I trust the most. You cannot go wrong with these (*as stated in English by the participant*).”

Miranda painted t-shirts with fabric paint and created acrylic paintings on canvas. She stated that she preferred materials that dried faster because it felt more comfortable for her to observe the results as soon as she could.

As the researcher, I was drawn to create an oil painting on canvas and write a poem. These are the art forms that I prefer in my regular artmaking practice because they feel closer and more familiar. So, my experience in choosing which art form to contemplate equanimity with resonated with participants’ statements.

Theme 5: equanimity is a choice. All participants depicted a moment, either during their artmaking process or in their practice of equanimity, when they had to make a choice between exerting equanimity or not. Hence, they described the maintenance of their equanimity practice as a conscious choice made in the moment.

Vanessa explained in her second interview that it was harder for her to practice equanimity when she faced a sad or negative event in her life. She talked about a friend who committed suicide, and how she associated her friend with Virginia Woolf who committed suicide on a river. Vanessa ended up illustrating the moment when Woolf decided to go on the river and end her life. During the creative time period, Vanessa stated that she questioned how it

could be possible to receive the news about a close friend's suicide, with equanimity. She said: "When I questioned it, I realized that equanimity is a choice. To choose to understand someone who commits suicide, instead of blaming them, or blaming oneself. It is a choice not to blame." In her second interview, she admitted that it was still hard for her to stop blaming herself, but that contemplating equanimity through artmaking during the creative period helped her come a little closer to making peace with herself about her friend's death.

Claudia witnessed experientially how practicing equanimity became a choice point for her. She was working on a clay object during the creative period. She had planned how she wanted the object to be. However, to her surprise, it did not go as planned and the clay got folded down as if it was made of linen. Claudia said: "Finally, I decided to go ahead with it. I made a choice to accept the object as it was, even though it was different than what I anticipated." She talked about her experience as an example of how one might cultivate equanimity through artmaking. Her choice to embrace her experience with equanimity "brought along the feeling of joy and fun."

Michelle talked about the relationship between her art and practice of equanimity in her second interview. She stated:

Equanimity and art feed each other. Practicing equanimity helps me embrace whatever I create. For instance, it is hard for me to present my poems to others but practicing equanimity makes it easier for me to let others witness my poems. I also believe the relationship between equanimity and art is a two-way street. Equanimity helps art flow and art makes it possible for me to deepen my experience of equanimity. It is hard to tell which comes first. I think the concept of equanimity creates a space of embracement and

safety. But there is another piece to it. You need to choose to be and remain in that space. And it is not easy. I believe art makes it easier to reach that space.

Michelle's description of how art and equanimity relate in her experience is an example of how equanimity might be cultivated through artmaking when one makes the choice to practice it.

Josephine decided to use linen as part of the art piece that she created on canvas. As she worked on the piece, she started to realize how the process of making this artwork was aligned with how she experienced the growth of equanimity in her life. In her second interview, she explained her realizations:

You have to choose and to make an effort to experience equanimity. You have to sew it piece by piece, that is what I did in this piece. Then I realized, in art, equanimity comes naturally. Even though this piece ended up being different than I expected, it grew on me as I was creating it. When I dwelled on the process of creating it, I realized that it was just like how equanimity is cultivated. You decide to practice it, you work on it, you accept whatever happens along the way.

Alice created two initial drawings on white paper made with pastel crayons which she shared during her check-in. The images on these preliminary drawings were “the hand of a conductor” and “a pizza oven.” She explained that she felt like a conductor at times in her life because of “inner and outer pressures (*as stated in English by the participant*).” She positioned equanimity as “a helpful resource in the quest to balance pressures in life (*as stated in English by*

the participant).” She added that it takes a decisive effort to continue practicing equanimity which she described using the pizza oven metaphor. She said:

Equanimity for me is like tending the fire and keeping it in a contained form. And in that form, fire has a lot of power, it has the power to melt and reshape, cook something raw.

But do it slowly, so that it is not a distracted fire. Just like a pizza oven, the fire is not too high, it is not too flat. (...) Equanimity is the story of keeping the lukewarm attitude. It is about being responsive in a very tepid way in life (*as stated in English by the participant*).

Miranda talked about how one might decide to practice equanimity by choosing their own perspective in life. She said in her first interview: “There are many ways of looking at things, and I can choose how I approach the situation, which affects how I experience it.” She closely related art, nature and equanimity. She said that art helped her learn how to embrace all by presenting possibilities and a way-out if needed, such as changing colors or redrawing images. She thought it resonated with how nature embraced all, decay, death and birth, without differentiating. She stated that artmaking helped her understand nature better which was, according to her, “embodiment of equanimity.” Miranda explained her thoughts on art, nature and equanimity, in her first written response, as:

In art, whatever happens on canvas, you can always change it, find a different approach.

You can say: “Okay, something went wrong but I have a way out.” Just like in nature. A

flower dies, a branch breaks, there is illness, but there are also new sprouts. So, all is natural. This is equanimity. This how one needs to perceive life if one chooses to practice equanimity. And art helps one develop that perspective.

As the researcher, my experience with equanimity resonated with participants' descriptions and experiences. I wrote in my journal on February 25th, 2019:

Choosing equanimity daily... I need to keep reminding myself to let it be, to accept it as it is. Hard. But I know it is possible. Some days, I step out of my equanimity practice. Judgement rushes in. To go back in, I need to choose, re-choose to live life with a sense of equanimity. I know that life gets more joyful when there is equanimity in the air.

The excerpt from my research journal underlined how practicing equanimity relied on a daily renewal of my resolution.

Theme 6: implications of equanimity for expressive therapies. Three participants (one art therapist, one expressive arts therapist and one art therapy practitioner who is also a clinical psychologist) reflected on implications of equanimity for Expressive Therapies. Their answers yielded a two-fold, potential benefit of practicing and contemplating equanimity through artmaking. The participants underlined how the practice of equanimity through artmaking supported their professional practice and the therapeutic process of their clients.

Implications for the therapist. Josephine, an art therapist, described her perception of the role which equanimity played in Expressive Therapies as:

In my Art Therapy orientation, there is no good or bad art; there is no right, there is no wrong. Of course, we all have a variety of feelings. I might feel closer to one particular artwork or I might dislike another, but all artworks teach me something, they are all equal

teachers for me. In that sense, equanimity is one of the core qualities of Expressive Therapies (*as stated in English by the participant*).

In Josephine's professional experience, practicing equanimity made it easier for her to maintain her serenity while witnessing what her patients were going through. She said: "I believe my practice of equanimity helps me be in the room with my patients calmly and non-judgmentally." Furthermore, she stated that contemplating equanimity through artmaking during the creative period deepened her equanimity practice. Josephine created a layered artwork, made of various linens which became layers on top of a canvas. She said that she realized how this artwork mirrored her practice of equanimity "which also has layers and develops over time with experience".

Alice, an expressive arts therapist, stated that practicing equanimity helped her "feel more balanced" in her professional life. She said:

We do not know where the client's life is headed toward and we do not know what potential pathways that our client might choose, what they will bring along. We need to be okay with not knowing. This is when equanimity as a practice of the therapist comes in handy. It helps us remain at an equal distance to all possibilities (*as stated in English by the participant*).

Alice also talked about the field of Expressive Therapies in Turkey. She said that it is a fairly new field and that there are many discrepancies among its practitioners. Alice said:

I believe we might benefit from approaching the field with a sense of equanimity as practitioners who try to establish a foundation for Expressive Therapies in Turkey. (...) Equanimity might help us create a more containing and holding environment.

Both Alice and Miranda underlined how practicing equanimity supported the feeling of hope in their professional life. Alice explained in her second written statement that equanimity makes her more “solution-oriented by pointing out that there are endless options and possibilities, and that all possess equal value.” Similarly, Miranda said that she felt more hopeful when she believed in “the existence of possibilities and that there is always a way-out.” Miranda talked about how working on deepening her understanding and practice of equanimity through art-making during the creative period helped her realize: “Art offers endless solutions to problems I encounter on canvas or t-shirts. This mirrors how equanimity offers endless opportunities in life by showing me all options have equal weight.” She stated that her practice of equanimity helped her “be more resilient as a therapist and hold difficult stories of clients better.”

Implications for the clients. Josephine works at a hospital with children and helps them cope with stress and pain that stem from their medical illness using talk and art therapy.

Josephine stated:

I work with children in a hospital setting, and that is what I try to teach them. Even though we do not call it equanimity, that is what we are trying to learn and practice during the therapeutic process. For instance, I would be in the room with a child who does not want to talk, share, but I can just be in the room with them, calmly, without imposing any expectations.

Moreover, Josephine added: “In the hospital, my patients are in pain, and using art therapy activities to help them concretize and grow equanimity in them, is useful and helps them relax.”

Both Alice and Miranda pointed out that helping clients embrace a practice of equanimity when they start their therapeutic process in Expressive Therapies makes it easier for them to cultivate “trust that whatever they will do or create will have equal value in helping them.” Alice stated: “Equanimity plays a facilitating role for clients when they try to let themselves be in the process (*as stated in English by the participant*).” Miranda pointed out that she encouraged her clients to approach art activities with a sense of equanimity. She explained:

I might ask my clients not to make plans of what they will draw or create, what it will represent, instead, for instance, I might tell them to just closing their eyes, touching and shaping clay spontaneously, then looking at it and trying to see an image in it, and then working on slowly shaping that image on the clay without judgement.

All three participants who actively work in the field of Expressive Therapies in Turkey underlined that the practice of equanimity benefits both the therapist and the client.

Arts-Based Research Findings

In this section, the artworks created during the creative time period are presented along with the participants’ descriptions, comments and realizations regarding their practice of equanimity through artmaking. All artworks are listed in Table 1. When there is only a title for the artwork in English, it indicates that the participant only provided a title in English.

Table 1

Artworks

| Artist | Artwork Title | Description of Artwork | Characteristics of Artwork | Figure number |
|-----------|--|--|---|---------------|
| Vanessa | Virginia Artık Bir Ara Versek – Virginia, It Is About Time We Take A Break | Illustration (Made with fountain pen and markers on cardboard) | 15.75x31.5 in. (40x80 cm) | Figure 3 |
| Claudia | Untitled | A cylinder-form, clay figurine | Height, 17.8 in. (45 cm); diameter, 9.8 in. (25 cm) | Figure 4 |
| Michelle | Untitled | Poem 1 | Written in English, exhibited on a small blackboard, written with white chalk | Figure 5.1. |
| | Untitled | Poem 2 | Written in Turkish, exhibited on a white cotton sheet | Figure 5.2. |
| | Olduğum Yer - Where I am | Song 1 | Written in Turkish | |
| Josephine | Untitled | Song 2 | Written in Turkish | |
| | Growing Unshakeable Peace of Mind | Series of doodling with fine point markers on white cardboards, put on black cardboard | 39x7.8 in. (100x20 cm) | Figure 6.1. |
| Alice | Layering Unshakeable Me | A variety of linens on canvas | 9.8x9.8 in. (25x25 cm) | Figure 6.2. |
| | Pizza Oven | Figure drawing on white paper, with pastel crayons | 8.2x11.6 in. (21x29.5 cm) | Figure 7.1. |
| | The Hand of A Conductor | Figure drawing on white paper, with pastel crayons | 8.2x11.6 in. (21x29.5 cm) | Figure 7.2. |
| | Equanimity | Oil painting | 23.6x35.4 in. (60x90 cm) | Figure 7.3. |

| | | | | |
|------------|---|------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| | The Opposite of Equanimity | Oil painting | 23.6x35.4 in. (60x90 cm) | Figure 7.4. |
| Miranda | Enginar Çiçeği – The Artichoke Flower | T-shirt 1 | | Figure 8.1. |
| | Genç ve Dinamik Köpek – Young and Dynamic Dog | T-shirt 2 | | Figure 8.2. |
| | Kafası Karışık Kadın – Woman With A Confused Mind | T-shirt 3 | | Figure 8.3. |
| | Uzaylı Köpek – The Dog From Outer Space | T-shirt 4 | | Figure 8.4. |
| | Şaşırmış Birisi - Someone Who Got Suprised | T-shirt 5 | | Figure 8.5. |
| | Untitled | Acrylic painting | 27.5x32.5 in. (70x80 cm) | Figure 8.6. |
| | Denge - Balance | Acrylic painting | 27.5x32.5 in. (70x80 cm) | Figure 8.7. |
| Researcher | The Womb of Equanimity | Oil painting | 31.5x31.5 in. (80x80 cm) | Figure 9.1., 9.2., 9.3., 9.4., 9.5, 9.6. |
| | Untitled | Poem | Exhibited in a wooden frame | Figure 9.7. |

Furthermore, there was an informal exhibition by the end of the second interviews. It was held on June 16, 2019. The participation was on a voluntary basis. All participants decided to exhibit their artworks. One participant could not attend the exhibition in person due to a familial emergency, but her artworks were exhibited and she was contacted by phone during the exhibition. There were also visitors invited by the participants and the researcher, and they were called to witness and offer feedback through a semi-structured feedback form (see Appendix E). A summary of their comments is presented in this section along with the related artwork.

Artworks

Vanessa. Vanessa created an illustration which she named “Virginia, It Is About Time We Take A Break”. The size of the illustration was 15.75x31.5 in. (40x80 cm).



Figure 3. Virginia Artık Bir Ara Versek – Virginia, It Is About Time We Take A Break

Vanessa stated in her second interview that the hardest part for her was to practice equanimity when she felt sad and angry. She illustrated the suicide scene of Virginia Woolf which she associated with the loss of a close friend. She explained:

The illustration depicts the moment when Virginia lets herself go on the river. This moment makes me question: Was it a journey that she was taking? Can we perceive all as a journey? Was it scary? I try to make sense. I try to believe that it wasn't so scary for her. I have been re-reading Virginia's diary. I feel like I am trying to figure out my friend's passing by making sense of Virginia's letting herself go on the river. Illustrating this scene while contemplating equanimity, is my attempt to make peace with my grief.

Moreover, Vanessa talked about her surprise when she picked the color pink to paint her illustration. She said that she usually used black and white, and she never thought she would prefer the color pink. She embraced a similar, open attitude when she started to draw flowers. She explained:

I was dwelling on this illustration and how it depicted a death scene. But there are flowers all over, and they symbolize life and hope for me. Hope because once I learned to speak to my plant, and to care for it effectively, it grew. So, all is possible.

Another detail of the illustration which Vanessa pointed out was the contrast between soft colors, and the death scene and monsters that she drew. She said that she liked this "contrast between soft colors and rough images" because it reminded her of nature, and how "good or bad, beautiful or ugly, they are all learned labels, but the truth is that they complement each other." She talked about not being stuck on a label and finding that place of non-judgement in which there is place for both sides.

A visitor in the final exhibition also pointed out the contrast in Vanessa's artwork: "The one that tells Virginia Woolf's story stood out for me. Softness and positivity of its colors (mostly pink and white) contradict pessimist and depressed feelings evoked by its details." A similar contradiction stood out for another visitor: "For me, this piece is about femininity and

how confusing and distressing it is to be a woman. The illustration was all colorful, but to me, it felt like the dark side and inner conflicts of a very strong woman (*as stated in English by the visitor*).”

Vanessa explained how she perceived the scene she picked to illustrate:

I wanted to illustrate how a person might face themselves. I did not know how to do that. But, I ended up illustrating death, which might be, I am guessing the time when one faces one’s whole life, especially when one decides to commit suicide. This illustration helped me realize an aspect of the practice of equanimity which is acceptance, this is the essence of equanimity, it is different than empathy, it is about understanding.

Claudia. Claudia created a cylinder-form figurine, made of clay. Its height was 17.8 in. (45 cm) and its diameter was 9.8 in. (25 cm).



Figure 4. Untitled

Claudia, being a visual artist, said that she had dedicated the last decade to clay work which she felt close to and comfortable with. Accordingly, she chose to work with clay in order to contemplate equanimity further through artmaking. Her experience with clay was “representative of what equanimity looks like in daily life.”

Claudia started to work on a large piece of clay; she said that she “felt like creating a big piece.” Once she was done preparing the clay and started to shape the object per her wish, the clay started to fall apart and even though she called her assistant for help, they were not able to fix it as Claudia wanted. She said that she went through a phase of wanting to “force it to be as anticipated” but eventually she came to terms with how the clay took form on its own and she decided “to be open to all; to oneself, to others, to new opinions, and (...) not to restrict the process.” She said that once she was open to new possibilities, she made her peace with the piece and observed curiously the new form it was taking. She described that moment as:

When the clay was sliding down, if I kept saying “Oh, it got broken, I cannot fix it” and got sad, I could have destroyed the new form it was about to take. But I chose to do the opposite, I said “oh, let’s keep it this way then” and I ended up having fun with it.

Claudia told visitors at the exhibition about her experience of creating the figurine. Claudia’s accepting attitude stood out for a visitor who wrote: “The beginning point, the goal, the process of creating, changing the goal in the middle and accepting the form it took by the end... The way the artist went along with how the process evolved stood out for me.” Another visitor noted: “I felt like Claudia utilized the notion of ‘mistake’ as ‘transformative’.”

Claudia described herself as “being highly spiritual without attachments to any specific religion” and she talked about arts as “a way of deep meditation and spiritual practice” which helped her “work on self and shortcomings.” Claudia wrote in her second written form:

The art of ceramics offers new experiences and surprises throughout the creation process. This process is both educational and mind-opening. The clay itself helps us discover realizations based on new experiences. Accordingly, I encounter moments of equanimity while I make ceramics.

Michelle. Michelle wrote two poems and two songs. One of the poems was written in English, and the other poem was created in Turkish. The lyrics of the two songs were in Turkish. The researcher translated them and sent them to the participant for her to review. She approved the translations that are being presented in this section.

Michelle's first poem had no title and it was written in English.

Poem 1 (Original in English)

Close enough

Far enough

You are already inside



Figure 5.1. Untitled

Michelle said that the first poem came as soon as she decided to participate in the study. She stated that even though it did not make much sense at the time, now that she went through the contemplative, creative time period, she observed that the poem signified how “equanimity might be a quality that we already possess inside.” She chose to exhibit the poem on a chalkboard and erase it by the end of the exhibition, because she said: “The fact that it can be erased at any moment, symbolizes the impermanence of everything. How we are close to and far from everything all the time. This might help us remember to practice equanimity.”

A visitor in the exhibition offered feedback about Michelle’s poem. They wrote: “I think Michelle’s short poem describes love and friendship in its truest sense.”

Michelle’s second poem was untitled, and it was written in Turkish. The capitals, the color red and the underlining used in the write-up of the poem are congruent with how the participant wrote them originally.

Poem 2 (Original in Turkish)

Karanlıktan kurtulmuş bir sis bulutunun arkasında GÖRDÜM onu

Çok büyüktü!!!

ÇOK BÜYÜKTÜ

Uzun, uPuzun bacakları vardı

Hatta sadece bacakları vardı galiba

BÜYÜK BÜYÜK adımlar atıyordu

Ama olduğu yerde sayıyordu

(Bir) tarafı gitmek isterken

DİĞER tarafı duruyordu

Çakılı gibi çiviyle olduğu yere

Gitmek isteyen taraf adım atmaya çalıştıkça

Diğer tarafın canı kanıyordu

KIRMIZI kanıyordu kanayınca...

İçinden **KIRMIZI** çıktığına inanamıyordu

İÇİNE inanamıyordu

VE NEFRET artık eskisi gibi koyu bir DUYGU DEĞİLDİ

Bir bildiği de yoktu Aslında

Sisin arkasında

TEK

BAŞINA

Kalmaya karar verdi SONUNDA

--

Poem 2 (English Translation)

I saw it right behind the foggy cloud which recently escaped the darkness

So big!!!

SO BIG

It had long, loNg legs

I think it only had legs

It took BIG BIG steps

But was still standing in the same spot

(One) part of it wanted to leave

THE OTHER part was standing

As if it was nailed to the spot

While the part wanting to leave made an effort to take a step

The other part's spirit was bleeding

Bleeding RED...

It could not believe RED came out of it

It could not believe its own INSIDE

AND HATRED was not A DARK FEELING anymore

There was nothing that it Actually knew

Behind the fog

ALL

ALONE

FINALLY decided to stay

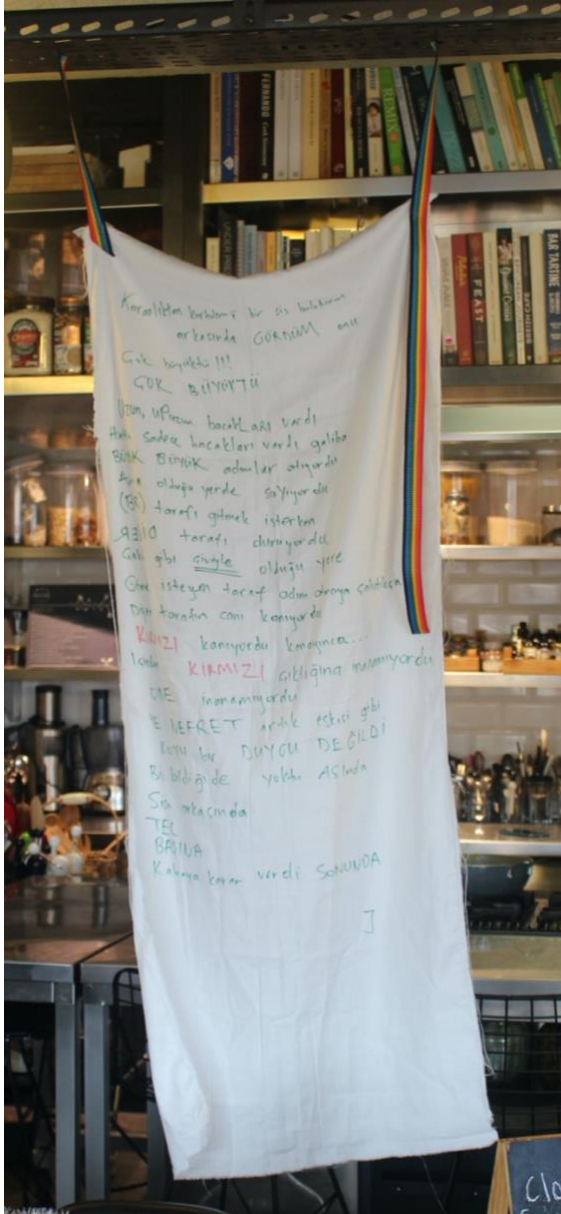


Figure 5.2. Untitled

Michelle exhibited her second poem on a white cotton sheet to underline how repulsive she felt by a particular tradition in the Turkish culture. She explained that the white cotton sheet symbolizes “the purity of women” in the Turkish culture. When a man and a woman get married, it is customary to ask for the blood stain on a white cotton sheet in the morning of their

first night together. According to the tradition, the blood proves the woman's innocence.

Michelle explained:

I wanted to emphasize what an embarrassing tradition that is! I wanted to show the pain of being a woman in this culture by using the white linen sheet. I believe that the night that the relatives ask for blood on the sheet is the night when a woman's soul dies.

Michelle talked about how a poem which emphasized pain and suffering actually depicted her understanding and experience of equanimity. She pointed out that the poem described the experience of being human, and how the existential pain is common to all human beings:

The feeling of the second poem is that even though we take big steps, no matter how big they are, no matter how big we get or small we are, we are all doing the same thing. We circle in close circuits. We all do. And the pain comes from our effort to step out of it.

That is also why there is blood in the poem. The pain is the same for us all.

Michelle underlined how remembering our similarities as humans might help us cultivate a mindset that is motivated by equanimity. She added that the poem also tells about how she changed and that it is hard for her to believe how calm she stays at stressful times. She said:

The "it" in the poem cannot believe its inside, neither can I. I practice Buddhism and it helped me cultivate calmness in me. I could say that I get to the point of acceptance much more easily now. I am surprised how this poem captured it. It also says hatred is not as dark as it used to be, which is descriptive of how I experience hatred. This is part of my practice of equanimity.

Michelle also wrote two songs. Her two songs are uploaded in SoundCloud with the verbal consent of the participant. The link for Michelle's first song, *Olduğum Yer – Where I am*,

is: <https://soundcloud.com/seyma-cavusoglu/cavusoglu-dissertation-michelle-song-1-oldugum-yer-where-i-am>

The lyrics of the first song is:

Song 1 (Original in Turkish)

Olduğum Yer

Kapım çalıyor

Açtım karşımda ben

Karanlıklar içinden çıkmış

Benden eskinin hesabını soruyor

Söyleyecek sözüm yok

Gidecek bir yerim yok

Tam olduğum yerdeyim

En doğru yerdeyim

En korktuğum yerdeyim

Sesim çıkmıyor

Ağzımda birikmiş kelimeler

Tükür, tükür, tükür hepsini yüzüne

Söyleyecek sözüm yok

Gidecek bir yerim yok

Tam olduğum yerdeyim

En doğru yerdeyim

En korktuğum yerdeyim

--

Song 1 (English translation)

Where I am

Knocking on my door

I opened the door, there I was

Out of the dark

Asking me about the past

I have nothing to say

I have nowhere to go

I am where I am

In the right place

In the place that scares me the most

I cannot make a sound

All words stuck in my mouth

Spit, spit, spit them all out

I have nothing to say

I have nowhere to go

I am where I am

In the right place

In the place that scares me the most

Michelle said that the song mirrored her experience of equanimity. She explained:

It had been a long time that I lived in fear of so many things. At some point, I started to realize that I cannot escape what I fear, because my fears are always with me. They come everywhere I go. The practice of equanimity helped me learn to live with my fears,

and that what I fear might also be a source of inspiration. So, this is what the song is about.

The SoundCloud link for Michelle's second song is: <https://soundcloud.com/seyma-cavusoglu/cavusoglu-dissertation-michelle-song-2>

The lyrics of the second song is:

Song 2 (Original in Turkish)

Kapattım ışıkları

Ve bütün kapıları

Sevdiğim bir şarkıyı çalmak istedim

Sözler hep eksik çıktı ağzımdan

Koşmak istedim sonra sokak sokak

İnsanlara çarptım

Gitmek istedim arkama bile bakmadan

Korkularıma takıldım

Sildim bütün yazdıklarımı

Doğruları yanlışları

Kazandın kaybettin aldın sattın

Bütün bunları bir kenara bıraktım

Koşmak istedim sonra sokak sokak

İnsanlara çarptım

Gitmek istedim arkama bile bakmadan

Korkularıma takıldım

--

Song 2 (English translation)

I turned off the lights

And shut all the doors

I wanted to play a song that I loved

But the words that got out of my mouth were incomplete

I wanted to run in the streets

I bumped into people

I wanted to go without looking back

I bumped into my fears

I erased all that I wrote

All the rights and wrongs

You won, you lost; you bought, you sold

I left them all on the side

I wanted to run in the streets

I bumped into people

I wanted to go without looking back

I bumped into my fears

Michelle stated that her poems and songs created during the creative period helped her deepen her understanding of equanimity and realize some moments from her life in which she practiced equanimity. She said:

So many things going on with life, with the World. It is not easy to just say: “Okay, from now on, all is equal to me.” But I can always try and choose to practice equanimity and keep working on it.

Josephine. Josephine, an art therapist, created two artworks during the creative time period. Firstly, she made a series of doodling with fine-point markers on white cardboards which she put together on a black cardboard, size 39x7.8 in. (100x20 cm). She called the series “Growing Unshakeable Peace of Mind (*as stated in English by the participant*).”

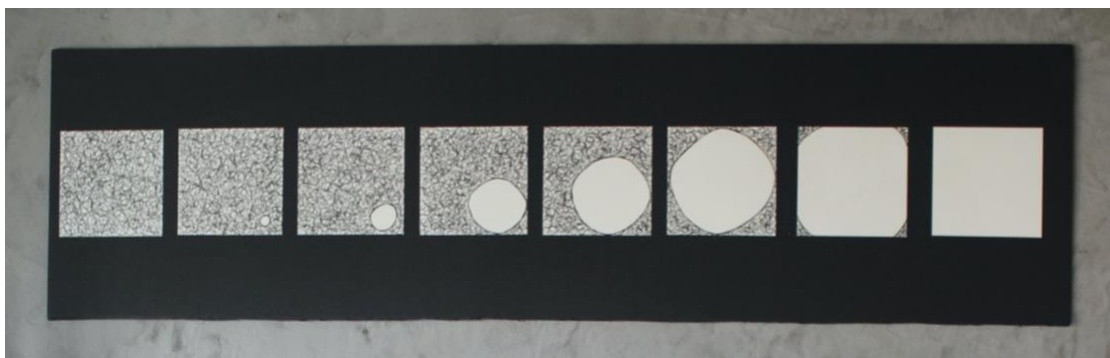


Figure 6.1. Unshakeable Peace of Mind

Josephine stated that as a practicing Buddhist, she was working on developing her practice of equanimity. When she committed to the study, she looked for an art form that might help her deepen her understanding of equanimity. As visual arts were her primary form of art, she decided to use fine point markers and explore how creating lines and circles on white cardboard would feel. As she kept going by adding another white cardboard and then another, she finally found herself creating a small white space on the cardboard and enlarging it as she kept on doodling. She said:

I used to have a quote by Lao Tzu on my desk at work: “To the mind that is still, the whole universe surrenders.” It is about finding and maintaining that stillness. As I kept on drawing the lines, I was so focused, all else disappeared. It was as if I had drawn what was inside of my mind on paper. I started with tangled thoughts, and as I was doodling, they calmed down little by little, and the white surface started to appear as the calmness started to appear in my mind. Look at the second from the right, how big the plain

surface got. After that one, I stopped and looked at the paper, realizing how it mirrored my state of mind at the time. I wanted to add a final cardboard, empty, white, symbolizing a pure state of equanimity. The series looks very much like the journey I am taking toward a state filled with equanimity.

Josephine said that this piece of art reminded her how equanimity is a choice. She explained that it was about choosing which path she would take: Would she let her mind be entangled or choose to remain in her practice of equanimity? Josephine's experience with her first artwork was both an example of how art might reflect the practice of equanimity through the art-making process and how the artwork might be utilized as a reminder that helps one to maintain their practice of equanimity.

A visitor at the final exhibition described Josephine's artwork as: "It looks like a universe filled with stars. When the focus gets closer, you see how different they are. But when the focus is far away, they all look as one and the same." The visitor's feedback resonated with how Josephine described equanimity in her first written form during her first interview, before she created the artwork. She wrote:

Trying to define equanimity makes me think about the stars in the sky. They all exist separately, but they all look beautiful together. It is as if none of them is different, but unless they all exist together, they wouldn't be as impressive, so each one is valuable.

Secondly, Josephine created an artwork made of a variety of fabrics which were situated as layers on canvas, size 9.8x9.8 in. (25x25 cm). She called this piece of art "Layering Unshakeable Me (*as stated in English by the participant*)."



Figure 6.2. Layering Unshakeable Me

Josephine talked about a part of her journaling during the creative period. She said that as she was contemplating equanimity, she realized how her anger got on her way to practice equanimity. She tried a method in journaling and wrote a letter using her non-dominant hand as if this hand represented anger. Then, she used her dominant hand to reply as herself to anger. As a final step, she let her non-dominant hand to respond as anger. She explained:


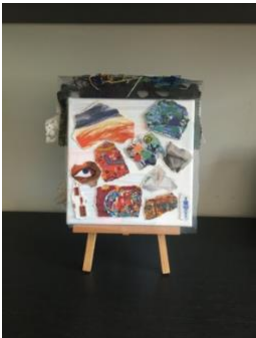
I wanted to understand my anger. I realized it makes it difficult for me to practice equanimity. I believe if I may understand my anger better, I might find a balanced state in which I could both embrace my anger, and still practice equanimity.

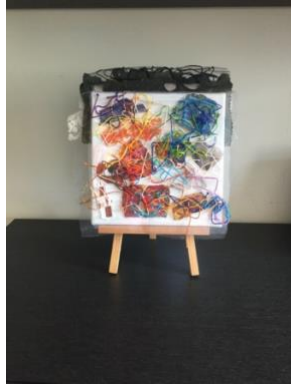
As Josephine was working on understanding her anger better, she realized that there were layers to her existence, and she started to wonder where equanimity fit in her layered presence. She decided to project this realization on her artmaking and she ended up creating Layering Unshakeable Me. She said that she chose to use linens because the material felt close and comfortable. She made nine layers including the canvas which she also thought of as a layer and

colored accordingly. Layers of Josephine's second artwork are presented in Table 2, along with their pictures.

Table 2

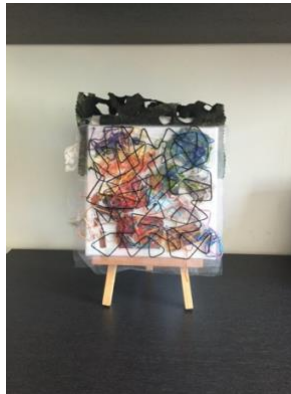
Layers of Josephine's Second Artwork

| Number of Layer (Starting from the bottom – as preferred by the participant) | Photo of The Layer | Name of The Layer (As stated in English by the participant) | Descriptive Words The Participant Used For The Layer |
|--|---|--|--|
| 1 st Layer |  | “Unconscious Mind – The Moment I Was Born” | Represents “the blank state of mind I was born with, which was also influenced by the collective unconscious” |
| 2 nd Layer |  | “First Memories” | “Some more concrete, some more abstract; to be seen, to be taken care of, home, Istanbul, tears, learning about the World” |

3rd Layer

“Feelings Born Out
of First Memories”

“Tied to first
memories, tangled,
colorful”

4th Layer

“Less Colorful
Feelings”

“Darker, still tangled;
these are about not
being seen or taken
care of sufficiently,
beginnings of
feelings of
incompetence and
unworthiness”

5th Layer

“Feelings of
Incompetence and
Unworthiness
Deepening”

“This is my spider
web; if I get caught
up in it, it gets really
hard to escape”

6th Layer

“Anger”

“This layer feels primitive, like raw meat; this is why I chose leather-like fabric, this isn’t permeable like other layers”

7th Layer

“All the Learned Behaviors”

“Most people do not know my anger; this is the layer that they get to see; so these are what my family and my culture taught me and expected of me. The materials are all from my home and family members; e.g. a piece of the dress my grandma sew for me when I was in primary school, a piece of my mother’s old dress, a

8th Layer

“Equanimity”

piece of another dress
my mother made for
me.”

“I put this layer last
because I questioned
where equanimity fit,
and I decided it is
underneath the last
layer.”

“This linen, woven
mat fabric, represents
the soft and
unshakeable state of
equanimity. Three
pieces were sewed
together to represent
how equanimity takes
effort.”

9th Layer



“The Appearance of Josephine”

“Permeable, one color, professional, educated”

Josephine said that the layered artwork helped her concretize her practice of equanimity and how much of it she was able to embody. She added that, depending on her state of mind, she might switch back and forth between layers. She stated: “This piece also reminds me of my overall practice of equanimity. Equanimity also develops in layers, in time, step by step.”

Visitors in the final exhibition were invited to touch the artwork and go through the layers. The experience of witnessing the layers stood out for a visitor who wrote in the feedback form: “Telling about life with fabric, linens, and witnessing how the canvas filled up with pieces of linen is impressive. It has a familial connotation in me.” The feedback resonated with how Josephine created some layers of the artwork using pieces of family heirloom. Another visitor wrote: “Layers of linen are like existence; showing the complex interaction among body, soul and mind; it is like observing many selves, sewn to become the special ‘me’.”

Another visitor described the experience of witnessing the layers through touch and sight as:

It helped me calm down the existential tension I carry around in me. As I went through the layers, touching, feeling, I simultaneously thought about Michelle’s songs, and it was as if feelings evoked by the songs were embodied in Josephine’s artwork.

Alice. Alice, an expressive arts therapist, created two figure drawings on white paper with pastel crayons, size 8.2x11.6 in. (21x29.5 cm), and two oil paintings on canvas, size 23.6x35.4 in. (60x90 cm).

Her first figure drawing:

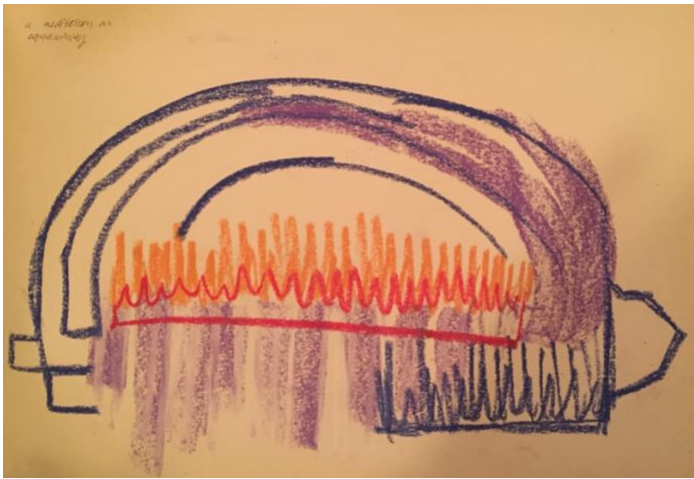


Figure 7.1. Pizza Oven

Alice described the image on her first drawing, which she shared during her check-in, as a pizza oven. She referred to Ellen G. Levine's book, *Tending the Fire: Studies in Art, Therapy & Creativity*, (2003) and she explained:

Just like Levine describes how we should tend the fire of creativity; we should also tend the fire of equanimity. Equanimity necessitates a tepid approach in life, and just like in a pizza oven, we have to attend to it to make sure it is at the right state (*as stated in English by the participant*).

Alice's second drawing:

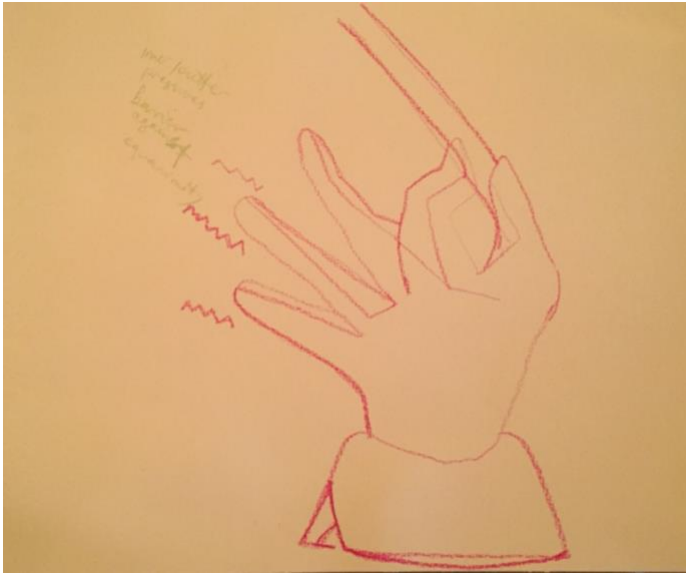


Figure 7.2. The Hand of a Conductor

Alice described the image as a conductor's hand. She talked about her busy life and how her mind is always filled with thoughts, plans, events to follow, people to connect with and projects. She said that she feels high levels of inner and outer pressures in her life which makes her feel like a conductor. She explained:

Here, there is a rope in the hand. This is the hand of a conductor. The rope represents how I feel stuck, caught up, captured. The somatic sensation of the image is vibration. There is anxiety. (...) I am like a conductor, trying to manage inner and outer pressures. When I step into the controlling role, it gets harder to practice equanimity. This image is about hindrances which I call pressures. (...) I need to remind myself the pizza oven and the tepid attitude and try to calm my inner conductor by being in a more accepting mode *(as stated in English by the participant)*.

Alice created an oil painting which she called "Equanimity":



Figure 7.3. Equanimity

Alice stated that this painting invites the audience to “experience being in a living room and witnessing how the day light gets in.” She pointed out that the colors and the brush strokes are softer than her regular, “big and bold (*as stated in English by the participant*)” style. She shared her surprise when she noticed herself drawing with gentle and small brush strokes, using light colors. She interpreted it as an effect of dwelling on equanimity: “It reflects how contemplating and practicing equanimity softens my regular, conductor style in life.”

Moreover, Alice talked about the badminton scene on the painting. She said:

Badminton is what I used to play when I was a child. It represents flexibility and joy to me. Stretching, catching, jumping, catching again... It is a soft, joyful and pleasant game. This is how equanimity creates playfulness in life. Life throws you a shuttlecock,

and you receive it. You can choose to get closer to the net or you might step back and hit it (*as stated in English by the participant*).

Alice pointed out that the painting helped her concretize how the practice of equanimity made her feel. She stated that after contemplating equanimity through artmaking, she started to think that the practice of equanimity is more plausible than she thought prior to the creative time period. She said:

The goal is relaxation and simple beauty, restoring simple joy, if possible through a practice of equanimity. That is what the painting does; the attitude in the painting is capable of doing that. In a hyper-stimulated environment, we can restore our normal threshold enough to just sit in a room without staring at a screen, without feeling overwhelmed. You are just happy because there is food and games (*as stated in English by the participant*).

After talking about the Equanimity painting, Alice said that she wanted to bring out another painting. She went back to the other room and brought another oil painting which she made before she participated in the study.

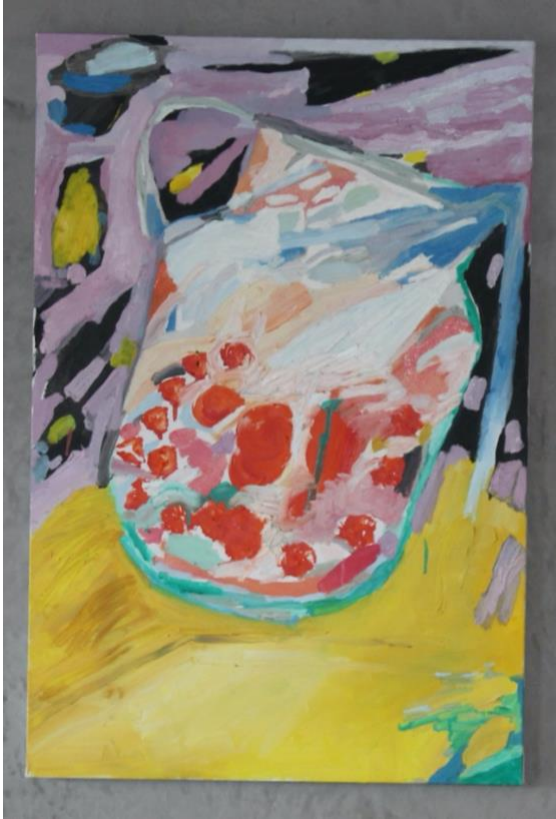


Figure 7.4. The Opposite of Equanimity

Alice said that this other painting felt like the opposite of equanimity and that she decided that she wanted to include it in the exhibition because it might help the audience discern equanimity better. She explained the second painting: “There is one big object, nothing else. Bold colors, big brush strokes. The pitcher is trying to contain the water, but it bursts out. It is like what equanimity is not.”

Miranda. Miranda, a clinical psychologist and an art therapy practitioner, underlined how she “admired, respected and worshipped” nature, and how she observed the embodiment of equanimity in nature. Therefore, she wanted to paint nature to deepen her understanding of equanimity. She chose different figures for her t-shirts and acrylic paintings, “all representing different beings and forms in nature.” She painted five t-shirts and created two acrylic paintings

on canvas, size 27.5x32.5 in. (70x80 cm). In her second interview, Miranda wanted to first talk about the t-shirts. Hence, the t-shirt paintings are presented first.

Miranda said that she wanted to be able to wear the art that she made. So, she decided to draw on t-shirts with fabric paint.



Figure 8.1. Enginar Çiçeği – The Artichoke Flower

The first t-shirt had an artichoke flower on it. Miranda described the image as “edible essence, and magical and aesthetic appearance.” She talked about the artichoke flower as “one of the miracles of nature.”



Figure 8.2. Genç ve Dinamik Köpek – Young and Dynamic Dog

Miranda said that on the second t-shirt there is a young and dynamic dog. This dog represented to her the dynamic part in her. She said: “No matter what my age is, a part of me still feels wiggly, dynamic, curious and alive, just like this dog.”



Figure 8.3. Kafası Karışık Kadın – Woman With A Confused Mind

Miranda described the third t-shirt as a woman with a confused mind. She said: “Not everything is positive and miraculous. People get confused sometimes, waiting for things to change or evolve. This woman is waiting.” She associated the image with a part of her that is “out of the ordinary and an abstract thinker”.



Figure 8.4. Uzaylı Köpek – The Dog From Outer Space

Miranda said that the forth t-shirt had also a dog figure on it but that it was different than the other dog because this was “a dog from outer space.” She explained that the dog from outer space represented joy, fun and wickedness.



Figure 8.5. Şaşırmış Birisi - Someone Who Got Suprised

Miranda said that she drew the image on her fifth t-shirt after she received some shocking news. Hence, she called it “Şaşırmış Birisi - Someone Who Got Surprised.” She explained: “There are surprises in life, both positive and negative. They do exist. They are a part of life.”



Figure 8.6. Untitled

Miranda described the images on her first acrylic painting as “orange slices and one whole orange.” She said that this painting was different than her regular style and that it was softer and more detailed. She underlined the concept of exploration with this painting. She said: “In this painting, details are revealed. There is an exploration. You can notice each slice, each piece, seed, flower, and leaf. It is about knowing that they are there.”



Figure 8.7. Denge – Balance

Miranda explained that she created more artworks than she usually would in this amount of time. She thought contemplating equanimity through art-making increased her creative expressions. She explained that she was going through a tough time in her life and that crystallizing her practice of equanimity in artworks that she could wear and look at, helped her maintain her calmness and balance. Therefore, she wanted to paint the feeling of balance as her last painting during the creative time period, using acrylic paint on canvas. She called the artwork “Denge – Balance.”

Miranda said that the figures on her artworks represented different parts of her and her life. She explained:

I believe contemplating equanimity while I was making art opened up the creative space for all different parts of me, of life. They appeared on t-shirts, on canvas. They all exist, and equanimity helps embracing them, just like nature embraces all its components.

Researcher. As the researcher, I made reflective art during the creative period. My intention was both to reflect on the research process through artmaking and to contemplate equanimity via art-making along with the participants. In addition to artmaking, I meditated and journaled. Layers of how I created the oil painting, *The Womb of Equanimity*, size 31.5x31.5 in. (80x80 cm), is presented in six steps. Also, excerpts from my research journal are presented.

The journey of the painting started when, in a contemplative state, I experienced a felt sense of Earth being a chaotic and constantly moving place. I felt the need to project the mental image I had, on paper.

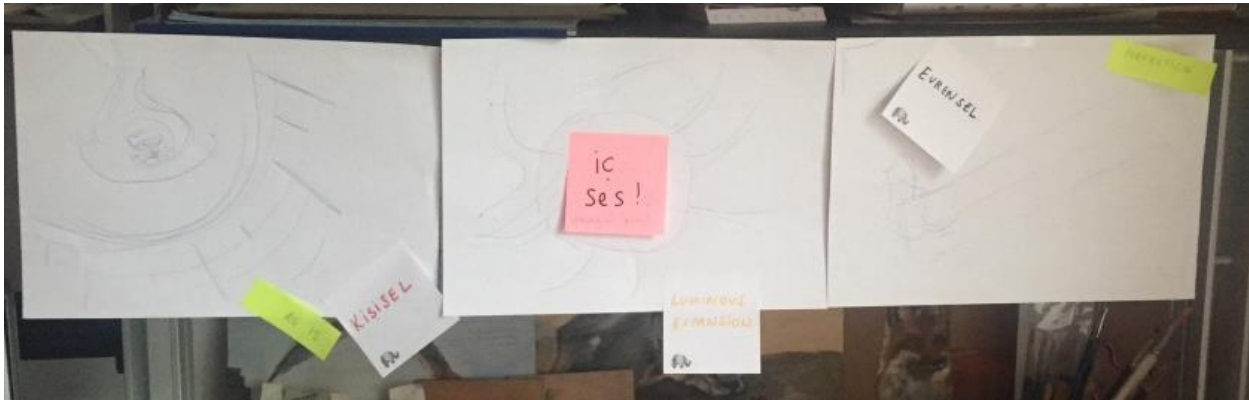


Figure 9.1. January and February 2019 - Contemplation on Paper

I started to enlarge the board I created with my preliminary pencil drawings. The post-it notes in the picture are (from left to right): As is, kişisel (personal), iç ses (inner voice), luminous expansion, evrensel (universal), perfection. I journaled in January 30th, 2019:

Like turmoil, tornado, I don't know what the chaos of living on Earth might be symbolized with, but it is something that has constant motion. The person who practices

equanimity might need to find a way to remain calm or stable or maybe distance themselves from what is happening.

I projected my preliminary sketches on canvas using a pencil. What appeared on canvas started to feel like a womb to me. Also, I placed a human figure at the center of the womb.

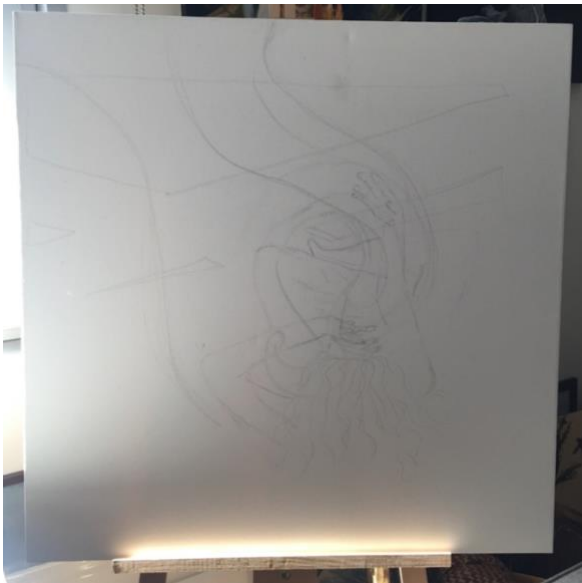


Figure 9.2. March 2019 - Forming



Figure 9.3. March 2019 - Being Born

As I shifted to painting using oil paint, the human figure started to take its form. I realized that it represented me. It was as if I was invited by the painting to get a bird's eye view of how I experience the constant movement on Earth.



Figure 9.4. March 2019 – Chaos Appears

The spirals, which symbolized the chaos and the movement, started to get bigger and stronger. I let the painting sit for a while and observed the spirals in a contemplative state, several times. I wrote on my journal in March 29th, 2019: “Growing. Moving. What do I know about this movement? What do I know about myself being in this movement? No escape. I shall not escape this time. I will sit. I will sit and be with it.”



Figure 9.5. April 2019 – Re-surfacing of Self After The Chaos

It took me a while to decide to re-surface the human figure in the painting. I was not sure if I wanted to re-create the same figure or change it. I finally decided to maintain the figure in the same posture, but I put some gray hair on it. I wrote in my journal on April 11th, 2019:

We change. I change. Change is constant. Maybe change is the constant motion of Earth. Thinking, living, working, breathing with equanimity helps me embrace it, embrace myself. Chaos comes and goes. The serenity of the heart remains untainted if I can get back to my anchor. What is my anchor? Is faith my anchor? That is what comes to mind, and what comes to heart. I remember the quote by Kahlil Gibran: “Stand firm in which you are.”



Figure 9.6. April 2019 - The Womb of Equanimity

As a final touch, small spirals appeared on the figure's hand, gesturing a ripple effect. The painting could be exhibit in all directions, but the way I presented it in this section is what felt most powerful. As the drawing was completed, I let it dry, keeping in touch with it regularly. I wanted to put into words what the painting evoked in me. Eventually, a poem came along on April 30th, 2019.

Dönmüyor ki,
 Duruyor.
 Durmayı biliyor.
 Her ne yaşarsa yaşasın,
 Durmayı biliyor.
 Akıyor.

Akmayı biliyor.

Aktığını biliyor.

Ve duruyor.

Her kim olursa olsun temas ettiği,

Durmayı biliyor onunla.

Ve duruyor

Anda.

Anda olduğunu biliyor.

Nefeste,

Nefeste can olduğunu biliyor.

Gerisi hayat,

Yaşanıyor.

Durmayı bildiğinde

Canlanıyor.

--

It doesn't swirl,

It stops.

It knows how to stop.

Whatever it goes through in life,

It knows how to stop.

It flows.

It knows how to flow.

It knows that it flows.

And it stops.
 Whomever it contacts,
 It knows how to stop with them.
 And it stops
 In the moment.
 It knows it is in the moment.
 In the breath,
 There is life in the breath.
 The rest is what happens,
 And it goes on.
 When you know how to stop
 You live.
 The poem was exhibited in a wooden frame.



Figure 9.7.

A visitor in the exhibition described what The Womb of Equanimity evoked in them: “I am impressed by the serenity which is in contrast with the spiral. So much calmness in something that is supposed to be so dynamic (*as stated in English by the visitor*).” Another visitor reflected: “I observed calmness, stillness and movement, all together, in the painting. Afterwards, I read about what the painting made me feel, in the poem.” Their feedback resonated with my creative process in which I contemplated on the co-existence of the constant movement of Earth and the serenity that comes with practicing equanimity.

All visitors were invited to describe the exhibition in three words in their written feedback forms. Their responses are presented in Table 3. If there is only a response in English, it means that the visitor only provided words in English. Otherwise, the researcher translated the words into English.

Table 3

Descriptive Words of Visitors of The Exhibition

| Visitor | Words in Turkish | Words in English |
|---------|---|---|
| 1 | Aynı, farklı, bağlı | Same, different, connected |
| 2 | Kişisel yolculuk, paylaşım, duygular | Personal journey, sharing, feelings |
| 3 | İnsan, gerçek, hayal | Human, real, dream |
| 4 | Varoluşsal kaygıyı dindirmek, ölüm korkusunu yenmek | Calming the existential anxiety, overcoming fear of death |
| 5 | Kozmos, var olmak, arayış | Cosmos, existing, searching |
| 6 | | Serenity, dialogue, inner/secretive world of the spirit |
| 7 | Yaşamda döngüler, çoğaltmak, hafiflemek, cesaret | Circle of life, increase, relief, courage |
| 8 | Canlı-yaşam-varlık, hayat | Alive-living-being, life |
| 9 | Samimiyet, hayatın içinden, paylaşım | Honesty, through life, sharing |

The final entry on my journal was the day after the exhibition. I wrote in June 17th, 2019: “Maybe the balance is being both, living both, embracing both, acknowledging both

simultaneously. Equanimity might be about embodying both sides, moving and stopping, at the same time.”

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the current study in the context of connections and common patterns among themes, artworks and the literature. The results of the current study displayed qualities of the practice of equanimity which were already highlighted in the literature, but they also added to the literature with initial insight regarding the experience of equanimity expressed through art. Hence, the findings of the current study provide a preliminary understanding to establish an equanimity-based approach in the field of Expressive Therapies. Finally, the current chapter will discuss the limitations of the current study and implications for future research.

Reflections on Themes and The Literature

The qualitative analysis of the transcripts yielded six themes: artmaking process as an experience of equanimity, openness to novelty while making art to contemplate equanimity, *oluruna bırak* – let it be, contemplating equanimity through artmaking tools that feel familiar and comfortable, equanimity is a choice, implications of equanimity for Expressive Therapies (for therapists and clients). The first five themes will be examined in this section in the context of the literature. The sixth theme, implications of equanimity for Expressive Therapies, will be discussed in detail in the Equanimity and Expressive Therapies section.

Theme 1: Artmaking Process as an Experience of Equanimity

The first theme of the current study, *artmaking process as an experience of equanimity*, described how the participants used artmaking as a contemplative tool that helped them deepen their understanding and lived experience of equanimity. The participants of the current study talked about how their artmaking led to new realizations and helped them contemplate on

equanimity. Their depiction of artmaking as a contemplative tool aligned with how Franklin (2017) described art as a tool to reflect on life and make new realizations and how McNiff (1992) suggested that art provides new ways to discern meaning. Artmaking provides individuals with an opportunity to express the embodied knowledge and extend the depth of their realizations (Franklin, 2010; Levine & Levine, 1999; McNiff, 2011; Rappaport, 2013).

Artmaking has been described in the literature as a form of contemplative practice (Allen, 1995; Franklin, 2017; Kopytin & Rugh, 2017; McNiff, 1992; Moon, 2003; Rappaport, 2014). The participants of the current study described their use of artmaking to deepen their practice of equanimity as a contemplative practice as well. To illustrate, Miranda, the clinical psychologist and art therapy practitioner in the current study, talked about how painting images from nature helped her dwell on how nature embodied equanimity, which in turn strengthened her practice of equanimity. Consequently, it might be suggested that the current study offered examples of how artmaking might be utilized as a contemplative practice to deepen the understanding and lived experience of equanimity.

Theme 2: Openness to Novelty While Making Art to Contemplate Equanimity

The current study suggested that *openness to novelty* was part of the practice of equanimity deepened through artmaking. The participants of the current study reported that new forms and colors emerged in their artmaking when they intended to contemplate equanimity through their art. They explained that maintaining an open attitude toward new forms and colors during their creative process helped them understand how to practice equanimity in a deeper sense. Their description of openness to novelty, as part of their practice of equanimity via artmaking, is congruent with the literature. Openness to new experiences has been described as a foundational component of the practice of equanimity (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Makransky, 2008;

Rosch, 2007; Shoham, Hadash, & Bernstein, 2018). Desbordes et al. (2015) referred to equanimity as “even-mindedness,” highlighting how the practice of equanimity encompasses an open attitude by welcoming all experiences as equals. Eberth, Sedlmeier and Schafer (2019) wrote about how practicing equanimity leads to reduced levels of emotional reactivity, facilitating an openness to experience. Accordingly, Franklin (2000) stated that openness to whatever the moment might reveal creates a tendency to be less critical and more accepting, hence the practice of equanimity.

Moreover, in their openness to novelty, the participants of the current study described a similar attitude to what Pagis (2015) called “non-engagement” (p. 39) and to what Kraus and Sears (2009) referred to as “accepting” (p. 180). The participants of the current study described an openness toward their creative process which encompassed an accepting attitude regarding all forms and colors that appeared in their artmaking. They stated that their open and welcoming stance helped them understand the practice of equanimity better. They talked about how there was a balanced attitude between being too attached to what they were creating and being dismissive toward the artwork. Their depiction resembles how meditators in Pagis’s study described their attitude of non-engagement. Pagis observed Vipassana meditation retreats and interviewed participants in those retreats regarding the outcomes of meditation. According to Pagis, meditators cultivated the practice of equanimity through meditation which they described as non-engagement. Pagis explained that the non-engaged attitude is in the middle of being fully engaged and disengaged.

Similarly, Kraus and Sears (2009) worked on developing a measurement tool for lovingkindness, compassion, joy and equanimity. In their measurement scale, they have used the word “accepting” to describe the attitude in the practice of equanimity. What the participants of

the current study described as their practice of equanimity based on their open and accepting attitude during their creative process seems like the combination of how Pagis, Kraus and Sears depicted the experience of equanimity as a non-engaged and accepting stance.

Additionally, the participants of the current study stated that they have learned how not to judge what was emerging in their artmaking as part of their openness to novelty. The non-judgmental attitude has also been identified as essential to mindfulness (Franklin, 2000; Kabat-Zinn, 1994) and self-compassion (Neff, 2003). In addition, their non-judgmental stance is congruent with the components of equanimity identified by Maher and Cordova (2019): (1) acting with awareness; (2) being non-judgmental; (3) non-reactivity. Maher and Cordova studied the impact of the practice of equanimity in romantic relationships. The results of their study highlighted the non-judgmental attitude as an important factor in relationship satisfaction, because it helped participants accept their partners' vulnerabilities and emotional states as they were. This is similar to how the participants of the current study embraced the artmaking process and artworks non-judgmentally and with an open attitude. For example, Vanessa, the illustrator in the current study, let herself face her grief regarding her friend's suicide by contemplating equanimity through her artmaking. She stated that remaining open to her wish to illustrate the suicide scene of Virginia Woolf helped her deepen her understanding of how she could practice equanimity even when faced with difficult emotions like grief by embracing a non-judgmental attitude.

Theme 3: Oluruna Bırak – Let It Be

The third theme of the current study, *oluruna bırak – let it be*, described an essential component of the practice of equanimity. *Oluruna bırak* is used in the Turkish language to describe accepting the flow and might be translated word by word as *let it be*. It highlighted the

attitude of accepting the flow of events during the creative process as they were. The participants of the current study faced a moment in their artmaking when they decided that what they expected or planned did not go as they wanted. Hence, they chose to let the flow of events be and shape their creative process accordingly. For instance, Josephine stated that the fabric that was available when she created the artwork “Layering Unshakeable Me” turned out to be representative of her inner experience in the moment. She said that what she could find was different than what she had planned before starting to work on the piece, but she decided at one point that she would let it be and started to work with what was available. When she observed the artwork appearing during her creative process, she thought that it represented her inner experience and felt content about the end result.

The literature also defines a similar attitude to *oluruna bırak* – let it be as part of the practice of equanimity. It is defined as a letting go attitude in the literature (Christopher, 2018; Desbordes et al., 2015; Salzberg, 1995). Rosch (2007) analyzed the content of mindfulness-based therapies and emphasized the cultivation of “letting go” (p. 262) as an essential component of the practice of equanimity. Rosch described letting go as “relaxation” and “surrender” (p. 262). Desbordes et al. (2015) studied equanimity as the outcome of a meditative practice. Desbordes et al. highlighted a letting go attitude as an important part of the practice of equanimity. Christopher (2018) wrote about letting go as an outcome of understanding that all beings are equally valuable and underlined how letting go helps one accept the flow of the experience as it was and discover its meaningfulness.

Similarly, the Mevlevi person in my pilot study talked about reframing one’s perspective toward a more letting go attitude as a facilitator for the practice of equanimity. The Mevlevi person explained that according to the Mevlevi path, everything happens for a reason, therefore it

is valuable to learn to let go instead of resisting to what is happening in the moment. He said: “One bad thing is an open invitation to a thousand good deeds.” According to the Mevlevi person, the practice of equanimity is maintained through a deepening of what it means to let go in life. He clarified that it is not a passive state and that it is about endeavoring until it is time to let go. The Mevlevi person stated that the heart who is sincere knows when to let go and he quoted Rumi’s words, *either be as you look or look as you are*, to emphasize the importance of sincerity in the practice of equanimity.

Moreover, the second and third themes of the current study aligned with the *decoupling model* of equanimity theorized by Hadash et al. (2016). Hadash et al. underlined the necessity to decouple desire and pleasure in order to practice equanimity. The authors suggested that this would lead to enjoying life without clinging to any objects of desire. The *decoupling model* of equanimity is reminiscent of how the Mevlevi person interpreted the third painting, *The Drop*, (figure 2) I created during the pilot research study. In the painting, there was a drop and two figures facing each other, one white, one black. The figures were surrounded by a drop and underneath them, there was a fire and wood was burning. The Mevlevi person said that the wood might represent worldly attachments and delusions, and that the burning of the wood might symbolize one’s journey beyond duality, toward oneness. His description of detaching from worldly attachments is congruent with how the *decoupling model* of equanimity emphasized the value of detaching pleasure from desire and craving in the practice of equanimity. Also, the participants of the current study described a similar *decoupling* experience in their artmaking process. They talked about how detaching themselves from their preconceived expectations from the art form or their desired outcomes, led them to experience the new form or color that appeared in their work as an enjoyable and pleasant surprise. The participants observed how

remaining open to what art was evolving into and embracing an accepting attitude by emphasizing the phrase *oluruna birak* – let it be, helped them realize that not getting attached to what they desired evolved into a pleasurable experience. To illustrate, Claudia was able to enjoy the outcome of her clay work by decoupling herself from her desire to shape the clay in a certain way and accepting the form it took on its own. Therefore, it might be suggested that the artmaking experiences of the participants in the current study displayed examples of the *decoupling model* of equanimity.

Theme 4: Contemplating Equanimity Through Artmaking Tools That Feel Familiar and Comfortable

The fourth theme of the current study is *contemplating equanimity through artmaking tools that feel familiar and comfortable*. The participants of the current study chose to work with art forms and art supplies that felt comfortable and familiar to them. They stated that they had the tendency to work with art materials that felt safe to them in order to utilize artmaking to contemplate equanimity. For instance, Alice described the art materials she chose to work with as “you cannot go wrong with these” (*as stated in English by the participant*). Maher and Cordova (2019) identified a significant relationship between the practice of equanimity and the feelings of safety and compassion. The findings of Maher and Cordova are reminiscent of how the participants of the current study preferred to contemplate equanimity through artmaking tools that felt familiar and comfortable. It might have been easier for the participants to deepen equanimity via art supplies that felt safe. The participants talked about how they felt inclined to work with the materials that they thought were reliable. It might have been less difficult to abandon predetermined forms and colors and to accept the flow because they trusted the art form.

The participants of the current study stated that they wanted to make sure that the art form and materials could convey their inner experiences so that they could further contemplate their practice of equanimity through what they created. Their inclination to utilize familiar art forms is reminiscent of how creative arts therapists value that their clients feel safe and comfortable about using art supplies and art forms to express themselves (Levine & Levine, 1999; Malchiodi, 2012; Moon, 2010). Moon (2003) highlighted how familiarity with artmaking strengthens the depth of the inner journey one takes through art. Levine and Levine (1999) wrote about the importance of helping clients find the art form they feel safe with and they underlined that feeling “free in [their] style and expression” (p. 116) encourages individuals to express their inner experiences in creative ways. When participants of the current study were recruited, a requirement was regular engagement in artmaking. The way the participants of the current study described how their familiarity with art forms and supplies facilitated their contemplative engagement in artmaking is important to consider when establishing an equanimity-based approach in Expressive Therapies. In such an approach, it might be helpful to familiarize clients with art forms and supplies in order to facilitate the use of artmaking to contemplate equanimity.

Theme 5: Equanimity Is a Choice

The participants of the current study underlined how they made a conscious choice to practice equanimity in the moment. They faced moments in which they decided to let go of their desire or bias and to practice an open and accepting attitude. For instance, Vanessa illustrated the suicide scene of Virginia Woolf. Her intention was to investigate through artmaking whether she could perceive a friend’s suicide through the lens of equanimity. She stated being hesitant about practicing equanimity in the face of difficult events such as death. In her second interview,

she talked about how her artwork helped her realize that the practice of equanimity was about making a conscious choice not to blame herself and her friend about the suicide. Vanessa portrayed how making art to contemplate equanimity regarding a personal matter evolved into a new realization about the practice of equanimity. Her realization, along with similar experiences of other participants of the current study, highlighted that the maintenance of the equanimity practice might be related to continuously making a choice to practice equanimity in the moment.

This conscious choice is similar to what Kabat-Zinn (1994) describes in mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally” (p. 4). The emphasis on “*on purpose*” in the definition indicates a conscious choice to be mindful and to exist in life mindfully (Epstein, 2018). To cultivate a mindfulness practice, one consciously decides to work on being mindful (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). For instance, one might make the decision to meditate and observe phenomena mindfully. Accordingly, the fifth theme of the current dissertation study highlighted the conscious choice as an igniting mechanism in the practice of equanimity. Therefore, it might be suggested that there is a similar pattern in the maintenance of mindfulness and equanimity through making a conscious choice to practice in the moment.

Reflections on Artworks

Two motifs were prevalent across most artworks and artmaking process: nature and balance.

To begin with, the participants were inspired by either a figure from nature or a texture from nature while making art to contemplate equanimity. Claudia worked on clay which she presented as soil and heart of nature. Michelle wrote a poem depicting various body parts of a human being. Josephine chose natural fabric to work with. At one point, she stated that she

preferred a particular piece of fabric because it reminded her of raw meat. Alice painted a scene depicting how one might sit in a living room, observing nature through the window. Miranda talked about her closeness with nature and drew various subjects from nature such as animals, human beings and vegetables. As the researcher, I was also inspired by nature's ongoing motion and explored how to find stillness while continuing to change.

Vanessa illustrated Virginia Woolf's suicide scene, which occurred by the lake, surrounded by the elements of nature such as flowers and water. She specifically talked about what illustrating flowers evoked in her. She remembered how she struggled with her house plants. She stated that plants taught her how we all are connected which, according to her, was an essential component of the practice of equanimity. Vanessa is not alone in her realization that nature teaches us how we are interconnected. Wohlleben (2015), a forester, studied how trees communicate with each other through their roots and the fungi who survive via a mutually benefiting relationship with surrounding trees. According to Simard, an ecologist, "a forest is a cooperative system" (as cited in Toomey, 2016). Similarly, Li (2018) wrote about forest bathing which is a method of mindfully walking in and witnessing the forest. Li stated that forest bathing enhances the well-being of humans because it helps them realize that they are interconnected with all beings. Accordingly, Kopytin and Rugh (2017) depicted nature as the embodiment of mindfulness and equanimity. They talked about how environmental factors show us that everything in nature serves a purpose, hence every being is meaningful. Prechtel (1998) also wrote about the interconnectedness of all beings in nature and highlighted that all is equally valuable.

The nature motif occurring in all artworks is meaningful in terms of highlighting the embodiment of equanimity in nature which might be described as interconnectedness of all

beings and events. McNiff (2019) described the sense of interconnectedness as “embracing the resources and practices of [one’s] immediate environments to establish a reciprocal relationship to all of nature” (p. 162). Sussman and Kossak (2011) depicted the essence of interconnectedness as “a felt sense of union with other people, other life forms, objects, surroundings or the universe itself” (p. 57). Similarly, the Mevlevi person in the pilot study highlighted nature as the display of the interconnectedness of all beings. He explained that nature can teach us about how all beings exist for a reason and how they are each part of the unity which he called *vahdet-i vücud* (*oneness of the body, oneness of existence*). He shared his observation about how nature was depicted in all the paintings I created during the pilot study. The Mevlevi person said that the paintings might have directed me toward observing nature through which one might discern the interconnected existence of all beings and eventually cultivate a deeper understanding of equanimity. It might also be the case that all participants of the current study intuitively had an inclination to explore a deeper sense of equanimity through creating pieces of nature and contemplating what they might symbolize for the practice of equanimity. There is an intuitive knowing in artmaking which might be utilized as a source of information (Allen, 1995; McNiff, 1992). It is related to what Rappaport (2013) called the felt sense which enables individuals to access their embodied knowledge through artmaking. Accordingly, the use of Expressive Therapies might help individuals deepen their understanding and lived experience of equanimity through artmaking.

Moreover, most of the artworks and creative process incorporated an attempt at exploring a balanced state of being. It was most prominent in an artwork made by Miranda, filled with geometrical figures, which she called “balance.” She stated that contemplating equanimity through artmaking made her feel more balanced inside and that she wanted to depict this feeling

via a painting. For Claudia and Josephine, the exploration of balance was present in the creative process. Claudia witnessed how not being able to balance a piece of clay turned into an experience of equanimity. Josephine discovered how doodling, when made with an intention to contemplate equanimity led to a more balanced state of mind. Alice stated that two preliminary drawings she made, the pizza oven and the hand of a conductor, helped her explore how the lack of balance due to inner and outer pressures became an obstacle in her practice of equanimity. In my painting, I also explored a balanced state of being. I tried to draw a serene and balanced presence in the middle of a constantly moving environment. The word *balance* has been used in the literature to define equanimity. Pagis (2015) studied equanimity as an outcome of meditation and described it as a balanced state of engagement. Hadash et al. (2016) depicted equanimity as finding a balanced approach in life in which one decouples desire from pleasure.

Additionally, the visitors of the final exhibition offered feedback regarding what the artworks of the participants of the current study evoked in them. Feedback mostly focused on how artworks depicted life. To illustrate, the visitors were asked to identify words describing the final exhibition for them. Some of the words they had used were “human, real, calming the existential anxiety, overcoming fear of death, existing, serenity, circle of life, relief, alive-living-being, life.” Their words are reminiscent of how Eberth, Sedlmeier and Schafer (2015) indicated that the practice of equanimity led to a more balanced emotional state by reducing one’s emotive reactivity. The visitors stated that they had felt the presence of a calm state of being by witnessing the artworks created in the current study. Their feedback is valuable in terms of observing how the artworks made with an intention to deepen the practice of equanimity were received by individuals other than the participants who created them.

Equanimity and Expressive Therapies

The current study offered both qualitative and arts-based findings regarding how the understanding and lived experience of equanimity might be deepened through art. The results indicated that the participants were able to utilize artmaking as a contemplative tool to enrich their practice of equanimity. Both the artwork and the process of making art were informative regarding the essential components of the practice of equanimity. For instance, the qualitative findings indicated openness to novelty, an attitude of letting it be and making a conscious choice to practice in the moment as essential to cultivating an equanimity practice. The participants had learned these aforementioned components of equanimity through observing and dwelling on their creative process and artworks. For example, Claudia talked about how noticing that clay was taking a new form different than she anticipated helped her realize that she could enjoy the process by letting the clay be and adjusting her creative process accordingly. She said that this realization had become an anchor in her practice of equanimity. Artmaking provides an opportunity to experientially create an anchor, either through the artwork or the process of making it, that might be used as a reminder (Gambrel, Burge, & Sude, 2020; Halprin, 2002; Rappaport, 2009). Consequently, the findings of the current study add to the literature in the field of Expressive Therapies in terms of the relationship between artmaking and the practice of equanimity. The following section presents implications of the findings of the current study for clinical practice and therapists.

Implications for Clinical Practice

This section will discuss examples from the experiences of the participants of the current study, that might be related with a clinical practice encompassing artmaking and equanimity, in

the light of the literature. These examples might provide initial insight regarding potential benefits of combining the practice of equanimity and Expressive Therapies in the clinical setting.

Claudia, the visual artist of the current study, stated that her experience with clay became an example of how she could practice equanimity. She started off by planning what kind of an object she wanted to create for the current study. She said that she prepared the clay accordingly and started to work on it. However, the clay did not go along with her ideas and took a different form than what Claudia had anticipated. She resisted for a while and tried to reshape the clay. She said that at one point, she realized that whatever she did was not working and she could just let the clay be. After her decision to accept the flow as it was, she started to be curious about the new form that the clay was going to take and she ended up enjoying the process. In her second interview, Claudia told me about her experience and she said that working on the clay to contemplate equanimity helped her deepen her lived experience of equanimity. She stated that the moment when she decided to *let it be* during the creative process was significant for her daily practice of equanimity. Claudia underlined that her experience with clay helped her remember to be more accepting in her daily life and that the clay figurine became an anchor that symbolized the accepting attitude in her practice of equanimity.

Levine and Levine (1999) and Rappaport (2009) wrote about how artmaking process and the artwork might become an anchor to deepen our understanding and lived experience of phenomena during the therapeutic process. Springham and Brooker (2013) investigated what helps clients in art therapy change and enhance their well-being. The researchers observed that all participants in their study underlined that art helped them externalize their thoughts and feelings, hence becoming anchors or externalized reminders for their lived experiences and hope for future. Accordingly, it might be suggested that artmaking might be utilized to enhance the

understanding and the lived experience of equanimity by creating anchors and reminders for the daily practice of equanimity.

Moreover, as the first theme in the qualitative findings, *artmaking process as an experience of equanimity*, indicated, artwork and the process of artmaking might benefit the clinical practice by offering an opportunity to experientially deepen one's lived experience of phenomena through artmaking or the artwork. This effect is due to the ability of art to help one externalize internal experiences (Halprin, 2002; Levine & Levine, 1999; Malchiodi, 2012; McNiff, 1992). McNiff (2019) underlined that "art offers a way of communicating and expressing oneself when words are not accessible" (p. 162) and making meaning more reachable by creating access to inner experience. For instance, Davis (2010) studied the lived experiences of international students in an Australian university. There were 19 students in the study who spoke English as a second language. Davis utilized art therapy techniques to explore how the students experienced being an international student. The findings showed that many international students hesitated to seek talk therapy despite the difficulties they encountered in adjusting to the Australian culture, thinking they might not be able to express their thoughts and feelings in English. However, making art to self-express was relieving for them and the images they created "served as both an anchor for organizing thought and a communicative tool for expressing emotion" (p. 183). Similarly, in the current dissertation study, artmaking and the artworks helped the participants deepen their understanding and lived experience of equanimity by helping them externalize their inner contemplation regarding their practice of equanimity, observing components of their practice of equanimity, such as the letting it be attitude, in their artmaking process and utilizing the artwork as a reminder of the moment in which they experienced equanimity.

Furthermore, Michelle, the musician in the current study, spoke about how using artmaking to contemplate her practice of equanimity helped her feel less blocked creatively. She stated that she had been feeling less productive in terms of song writing until she committed to the current study. After dwelling on the connection between art and equanimity, Michelle highlighted that artmaking and the practice of equanimity feed each other. She specifically focused on the open and all welcoming attitude that she was reminded of due to contemplating equanimity via art. She said that accepting what was being created as it was helped her embrace her creative side and restart writing songs. She ended up composing two songs during the creative time. In addition, Miranda, the clinical psychologist and art therapy practitioner in the current study, spoke about how dwelling on equanimity while making art supported her creativity and she ended up creating more pieces than she ever thought she could in that time period. She had approximately two months to create and she painted five t-shirts and two acrylic paintings. In her second interview, Miranda said that she was surprised by her productivity and felt like it was due to contemplating equanimity on a deeper sense through artmaking.

McNiff (2019) highlighted “the activation of creative energy through art’s sensory and imaginative qualities” (p. 163). Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) stated that being in touch with one’s creativity might generate flexibility, self-confidence and “resilient creative coping” (p. 198). Peat (2000) underlined the healing aspect of creativity and wrote:

Much of what we do and the way we see the world is conditioned (...). We develop skills and early perceptions that turn into habits. It truly requires an act of creative perception to dissolve the old forms of mental conditioning and make way for the new (p. 24).

In clinical practice, supporting creativity helps clients enhance their well-being (Malchiodi, 2012). For instance, Gambrel, Burge and Sude (2020) wrote about how supporting adolescents' creativity through art therapy techniques helped them develop mindfulness skills. The authors constructed a case example based on their experiences with youth. In the case example, the 12-year-old entered into a journey of creating and accessing inner emotions through art therapy. The therapeutic process facilitated the adolescent to develop flexibility and mindfulness as a result of an increased use of their creativity.

Accordingly, based on Michelle's and Miranda's experiences in the current study, it might be suggested that the practice of equanimity deepened through artmaking might potentially help individuals become creatively more fluent. There is not enough data in the current study to theorize regarding what might have triggered Michelle's creativity and Miranda's increased level of creative productivity. However, recent studies in the literature have started to focus on the potential relationship between openness to experience and creativity. For instance, Tan, Lau, Kung and Kailsan (2016) studied self-reported creativity and openness to experience among 198 adult participants. The results indicated a significant, positive correlation between openness to experience and creativity ($r = .67, p < .001$). The current dissertation study identified openness to novelty as a core component of the practice of equanimity. Even though openness to novelty is not the exact match for openness to experience, it encompasses similar qualities such as accepting the unknown, and appreciating and seeking new experiences. The similarities are based on the way the participants of the current study described openness to novelty and the way Theurer, Rogh and Berner (2020) depicted openness to experience. Based on the findings in the literature regarding the potential relationship between openness to experience and creativity, it might be suggested that the heightened creativity of Michelle and Miranda might be related with

an increased level of openness to new experiences facilitated by an equanimity-based approach in their artmaking. If it is the case, it might provide the field of Expressive Therapies with insight regarding clinical practice; suggesting that contemplating equanimity while making art might support and enhance clients' exploration and healing through the creative process.

Finally, Vanessa, the illustrator, chose to work on the suicide scene of Virginia Woolf. She stated that her intention was to work on her feelings regarding the suicide of a friend which she had a hard time with. She was wondering if she could practice equanimity even in the face of a traumatic event. After creating an illustration depicting a suicide scene, Vanessa claimed that she came closer to making her peace with the death of her friend. She said that contemplating equanimity through this artwork helped her realize that equanimity was about making the choice not to blame herself and her friend.

Holmqvist, Jormfeldt, Larsson and Persson (2017) conducted a qualitative study with 21 adult participants who identified as woman. The participants had been attending either individual or group art therapy for different number of years. The researchers conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant regarding the images they created during therapy and selected to share in the study, and their experiences of art therapy. The results indicated that some participants experienced sudden shifts due to certain images they created and other participants experienced a gradual sinking of insight through artmaking. The authors underlined that "an important part of the image's meaning was the ability to project negative feelings and making them manageable" (p. 207). Similarly, Vanessa was able to reflect on her traumatic experience and grief through the illustration she created during the current study, to contemplate equanimity.

The literature supports that Expressive Therapies are helpful in trauma and grief work (Elbrecht, 2013; Malchiodi, 2012). The trauma and grief work in the field of Expressive Therapies is an immense field and beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, Vanessa provided an example of how contemplating her grief and equanimity simultaneously through her artmaking helped her make new realizations and, as stated by Vanessa, “get closer to make peace with it.” It was worth underlining as a potential benefit of combining the practice of equanimity and Expressive Therapies in the clinical practice to facilitate clients’ working on their difficult experiences.

Implications for Therapists

The three therapists in the current study (the art therapist, the expressive arts therapist, the clinical psychologist who is also an art therapy practitioner) discussed how their professional practice benefited from equanimity (the sixth theme in the qualitative findings of the current study). They emphasized how their practice of equanimity facilitated presence, serenity, resilience and acceptance. For instance, Josephine described her experience as an art therapist working in a hospital setting. She stated that there were times when it got difficult to witness the pain of her patients. She said that practicing equanimity helped her maintain her serenity and be present while she was in the room with her patients. Accordingly, Miranda stated that she worked with individuals who suffered from severe trauma. She claimed that her practice of equanimity made her more resilient as a trauma therapist.

The literature also underlined the usefulness of practicing equanimity for the therapists (Cheng & Tse, 2014; Davis & Hayes, 2011; Kravitz, 2015; Tsui, Chan & Tin, 2016).

Equanimity is thought to increase the level of attunement by helping therapists be less distracted by their own worldview and bias (Astin & Keen, 2006; Christopher, 2018; McRae, 2013).

Kravitz (2015) underlined that the practice of equanimity helped clinicians overcome anxiety over the unknown aspects of their work. Tsui, Chan and Tin (2016) studied the potential impact of practicing equanimity for health-care professionals working in perinatal grief support groups. The researchers observed that the professionals who practiced equanimity felt more self-competent when faced with difficult situations in groups and reported higher levels of professional quality of life. Accordingly, Alice, the expressive arts therapist in the current study, talked about how her practice of equanimity supported her when faced with the unknown during the therapy sessions. She stated that she encountered times in therapy sessions when she felt like she did not know where it was leading, or she felt uncertain about what the client's decision would bring along. She said that when she felt lost in the unknown, practicing equanimity helped her feel balanced and hopeful.

Additionally, one of the participants in the current study suggested that the Turkish Expressive Therapies community might benefit from practicing equanimity. The field is new in Turkey and there are discrepancies among its members, such as who can participate in the trainings or who should teach and practice Expressive Therapies. The participant thought that an equanimity-based attitude might help members of the Turkish community overcome their conflicts by cultivating a harmonious environment. The literature supports the participant's hopeful wish. Scholars stated that the practice of equanimity leads to the development of a sense of interconnectedness among all beings (Astin & Keen, 2006; Christopher, 2018; Ekman et al., 2005; Rosch, 2007) which encourages individuals to seek harmony and justice in a peaceful way (Boccio, 2018).

Finally, the visitors at the final exhibition of the current study provided feedback regarding their impressions of the artworks created to contemplate equanimity. Their witnessing

became a container for the artworks and their written feedback depicted how the artworks were perceived. This is reminiscent of the witnessing role of the therapist in the field of Expressive Therapies. McNiff (2014) wrote about how witnessing during the therapeutic process requires mindful awareness on the therapist's part and described witnessing as "to approach what is happening before me as the most important thing in my life at the particular moment, feeling a sense of responsibility and a desire for quality witnessing" (p. 44). Also, Kossak (2009) underlined that "tuning in" (p. 13) through witnessing in Expressive Therapies facilitates "the clear articulation of creative impulses" (p. 17) and enhances the therapeutic attachment. Hence, it might be suggested that the witnessing role of the therapist might be helpful in an equanimity-based artmaking process to help individuals deepen their understanding and lived experience of equanimity.

Limitations and Implications for Future Studies

The limitations of the current study include limited diversity in demographics and art forms used by the participants. The study was conducted in Istanbul, Turkey. All participants identified as Turkish and woman. This limited the cultural and gender-based background of the study. Also, the participants were recruited through the snowball technique which led to the recruitment of participants from similar socio-economic backgrounds. In the future, it might be helpful to try to reach participants from various backgrounds in order to explore a broader perspective on the use of artmaking and the practice of equanimity. In addition, one of the requirements for the participation was being well-versed in artmaking. The findings of the current study supported that feeling comfortable with the art form helped participants deepen their contemplation of equanimity via artmaking. However, it might also add to the literature if future studies could investigate how familiarity with the art form served the process of

contemplation and how people who were not familiar with artmaking would experience the artistic contemplation of the practice of equanimity.

Also, all participants in the current study identified as a spiritual person and had been engaging in contemplative practices that enabled them to cultivate the practice of equanimity. It might have played a role in their engagement in artmaking as a contemplative practice and utilize their artworks to deepen their understanding and lived experience of equanimity. Future studies might investigate how individuals who do not have an established practice to cultivate equanimity engage in artmaking as a potential tool to contemplate and deepen their experience of equanimity.

Another limitation was that, with the exception of one participant who wrote poetry and songs, all participants preferred to utilize visual arts. This might be coincidental. In that case, it might be important to try to include more art forms in future studies. It would benefit the field of Expressive Therapies to enhance our understanding of the relationship between various forms of artmaking and the experience of equanimity. For example, the practice of equanimity was described as a balanced bodily state (Hollan, 1992) and reduced emotional reactivity (Eberth, Sedlmeier, & Schafer, 2019) in the literature. These findings might be indicative of a bodily component of the practice of equanimity. Therefore, future studies might focus on the role that body and movement might play in the practice of equanimity. Investigating how the experience of equanimity relates with various art forms might establish a solid ground for an equanimity-based approach in the field of Expressive Therapies.

Additionally, it might be interesting to focus on the specifics of using visual arts in contemplating equanimity in future research. Some of the participants in the current study stated that having an image to contemplate on facilitated their practice of equanimity. It might be

valuable to study further the role of visual arts in deepening the understanding and lived experience of equanimity. Accordingly, there are many studies in the literature depicting the usefulness of combining art therapy and mindfulness (Coholic, 2011; Coholic & Eys, 2016; Franklin, 2017; Franklin, 2010; Kalmanowitz & Ho, 2016; Meghani et al., 2018; Monti et al., 2006; Monti & Peterson, 2004; Peterson, 2014; Peterson, 2015). Encouraging future studies to focus on combining the practice of equanimity and art therapy might also prove useful.

Moreover, the participants in the current study had a limited time period to creatively explore their practice of equanimity. In the future, it might be beneficial to observe how a longer creative process might evolve and how it might be converted into therapeutic techniques that could be utilized in the field of Expressive Therapies. For instance, it would be interesting to encourage the participants to establish an “imaginal dialogue” (McNiff, 2008, p. 30) with their artworks and further their exploration of equanimity via dialoguing with their artworks. McNiff (1992) described the imaginal dialogue as receiving the paintings as a new guest, continuously establishing a sense regarding “its physical presence” (p.105) and trying to discern what it is conveying. McNiff (2011, 1992) stated that the creative dialogue often provides the person with new perspectives and stimulates novel expressions. Accordingly, future arts-based studies on equanimity might explore how the imaginal dialogue with artworks created with an intention to contemplate equanimity might inform the artist.

Furthermore, Leavy (2015), Nagata, Kohn-Wood and Suzuki (2012) underlined the importance of reflexivity in arts-based and qualitative research in order to beware of the researcher’s potential subjectivity. I kept a reflexive journal and made exploratory art during the research process in an attempt to enhance the accuracy of the findings. In addition, the translations of the songs and lyrics were member-checked by the participant who wrote them to

ensure her approval of the English translation. As an additional layer, an informal exhibition was held at the end of the research process. Visitors were invited to offer feedback regarding what resonated in them as they witnessed the artworks created during the study. Their feedback provided an additional outlook on the potential impact of the artworks created to contemplate equanimity. Future studies might employ other triangulation methods such as the peer review in order to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Conclusion

The study of equanimity is fairly new in the literature. Equanimity has mostly been defined in the context of mindfulness. The qualitative findings of the current study align with the literature in underlining that the practice of equanimity encompasses an openness to novelty and a let-it-be attitude, when one makes a conscious choice to practice equanimity in the moment. The artworks and the creative process indicated that the participants of the current study had engaged in artmaking as a contemplative practice to deepen their understanding and lived experience of equanimity, which in turn enabled them to utilize their creative process to experientially deepen their practice of equanimity and the artworks as reminders of how to maintain their practice of equanimity. The qualitative and arts-based findings of the study add to the literature of equanimity within the field of Expressive Therapies by providing a preliminary insight on the relationship between artmaking and the practice of equanimity. Future studies are needed to explore how arts facilitate the cultivation of an equanimity-based practice. Also, future studies might shed light on how an equanimity-based approach might be incorporated in the field of Expressive Therapies.

APPENDIX A

POEMS AND IMAGES CREATED IN THE PILOT STUDY

Poem 1

The Eye

Look for me
Look through the fire
Your inner fire
Then look for the eye
Find tranquility in the balance
Of how similar a teardrop is
To a drop of the ocean
Learn from your tears
Cry, cry 'till dawn
So that your tears have free space
To tell their stories
Do not fear
Whatever you look for
Is deeply embedded
In your essence
The lens does not matter
You shall find it
If you simply keep looking

Poem 2

Such As It Is...

What if I start saying something like...
Once upon a time
Or
One day, deep down in the woods
I was just running
Running through the meadow
Just wanting to catch
Wanting to find
Wanting to define
Not knowing that it was so hard
Not knowing that it was actually easy
Not knowing anything about it
But just wanting
Wanting to be lost
Wanting to be found
Wanting to be
...
Just wanting to be.

And what if I drop the *want*?
 What if...
 What does it become then?
 To catch
 To find
 To define
 To be lost
 To be found
 To be.

Poem 3

Go Deep

Go deep into the woods;
 There,
 Stop.
 Stop and listen
 To the sound of your breath.
 Then feel the Earth
 Breathing
 Under your feet,
 Touching your skin,
 Passing gently through your hair.

Poem 4

The Eye of The Storm

All you fear is depth,
 All you kill is your humanity.
 In the blink of an eye,
 You tell your neighbor:
 I shall not be fooled again.

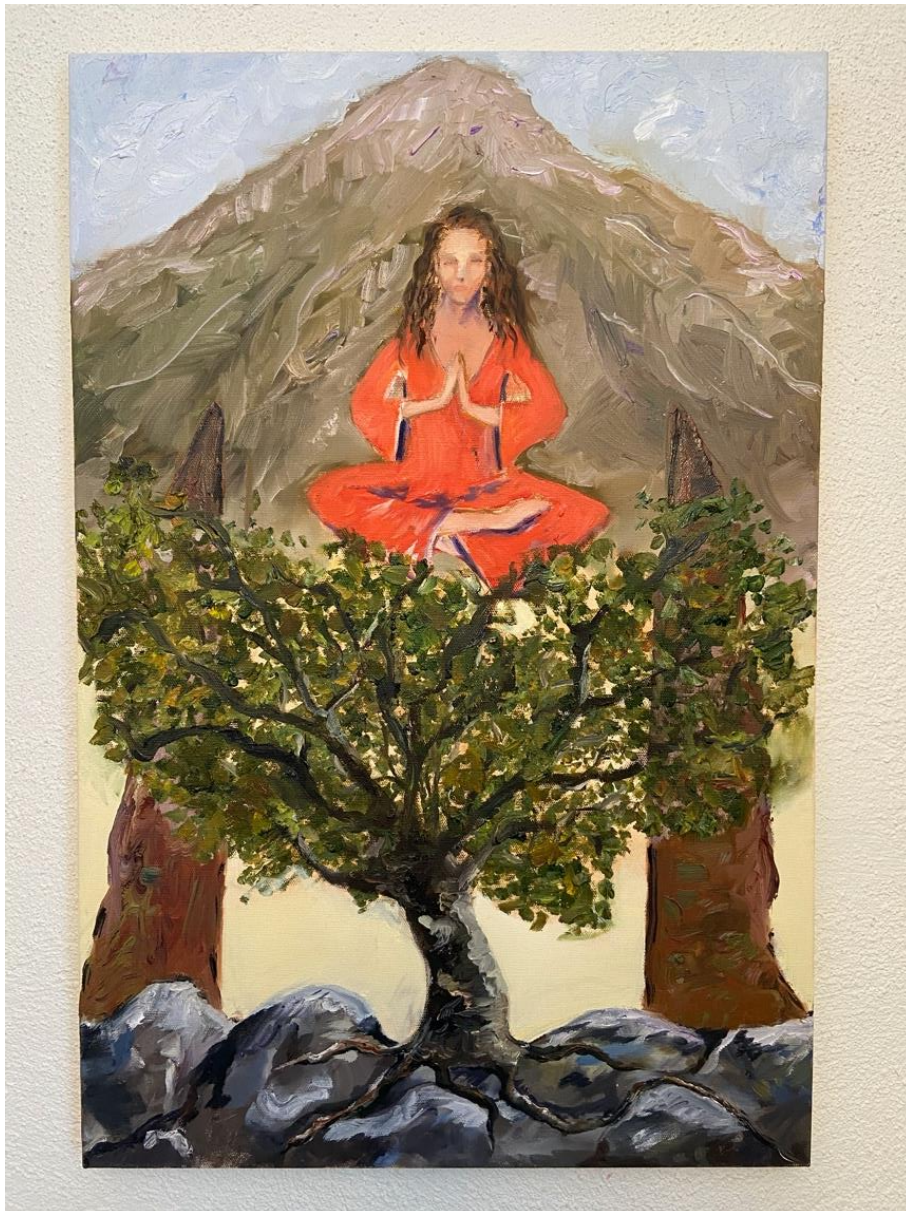
You look for power,
 You crave for stability.
 All you need is though
 Hidden in the cave of the heart
 Disguised as madness
 But is
 Calmness in the eye of the storm.

Poem 5

Discrete Time

One shall see
Love transcends all
One syllable at a time
Oceans construct sentences

Painting 1 - ANDA - In The Moment, canvas, oil painting, 24x16 inches



Painting 2 - Re-Cycle, unpolished wooden plaque, oil painting, 30x20 inches



Painting 3 - The Drop, canvas, oil painting, 20x20 inches



APPENDIX B**IRB APPROVAL FORM**



29 Everett Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel 617 349 8234
Fax 617 349 8190
irb@lesley.edu

Institutional Review Board

DATE: 1/23/19

To: Seyma Cavusoglu

From: Robyn Cruz and Ulas Kaplan, Co-Chairs, Lesley IRB

RE: **IRB Number: 18/19-028**

The application for the research project, "The Experience of Equanimity Expressed Through Art" provides a detailed description of the recruitment of participants, the method of the proposed research, the protection of participants' identities and the confidentiality of the data collected. The consent form is sufficient to ensure voluntary participation in the study and contains the appropriate contact information for the researcher and the IRB.

This application is approved for one calendar year from the date of approval.

You may conduct this project.

Date of approval of application: 1/23/19

Investigators shall immediately suspend an inquiry if they observe an adverse change in the health or behavior of a subject that may be attributable to the research. They shall promptly report the circumstances to the IRB. They shall not resume the use of human subjects without the approval of the IRB.

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORMS



29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138

Informed Consent Form

The Experience of Equanimity Expressed Through Art

Researcher: Seyma Cavusoglu, Ph.D. student in Expressive Therapies, Lesley University

Principal Investigator: Mitchell S. Kossak, Associate Professor, Ph.D. program in Expressive Therapies, Lesley University

You are invited to participate in this research to explore the experience of equanimity expressed through art. The purpose of the study is to deepen an understanding of equanimity and the lived experience related with it. In this study, you will be asked to engage in two interviews, a creative period of engagement in artmaking of your choice, and an informal exhibition.

In the first interview, you will be asked about your personal background, choice of art form and/or choice of creative arts modality, your artwork(s), how you experience artmaking, and what your understanding and current practice of equanimity is like. After the first interview, you will have one month to be inspired and create a piece that represents equanimity for you. You may use any art form that you feel attracted to. The researcher will contact you weekly after the first interview, to check-in and answer any questions that might arise. During the creative period, you will be invited to keep a journal. It will be up to you to journal or not. If you choose so, you might share excerpts during the check-ins.

By the end of 30 days, which can be called the creative period, the researcher will contact you once more to schedule your second interview. During the second interview, you will be asked about your experience of the creative period, your reflections on your artwork(s), and your current thoughts regarding equanimity. If you are a creative arts therapist, you will also be asked about your thoughts on applications of equanimity in Expressive Therapies practice. Each interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. All interviews will be audio-taped.

There will be other participants in the research. Once all interviews are completed with all participants, the researcher will organize an informal exhibition for art pieces, including her own which she will create during the research process. You and three guests of your choice will be invited to the exhibition. You will choose how you would like to present your artwork(s) (e.g. original artwork, pictures, live performance, audio or video recording). You will be informed about the time and place of the exhibition at a later time. The anticipated time is May 2019. All artworks and the final exhibition will be documented in the form of either original artwork, pictures, audio-recording, and/or video-recording, depending on the art form.

I _____, consent to participate in the study of “The Experience of Equanimity Expressed Through Art”.

I understand that:

- I am volunteering to engage in two interviews regarding the experience of equanimity expressed through art, to create a piece related with equanimity during the creative period, and to be invited to an informal exhibition.
- I will be asked to share my personal background in art and/or creative arts therapies.
- I will be asked about my contemplative/spiritual practice.
- I will be asked to reflect on the artwork(s) that I will create during the creative period.
- All interviews will be audiotaped.
- All art work and the exhibition will be documented either in the form of original artwork, photographed visual art, audio-recording, or video-recording, depending on the art form.
- Discussion materials, including transcripts, audiotapes, and documentation of art-works and the exhibition will be kept confidential and used anonymously only, for the purposes of supervision, academic presentation, and/or publication.
- This study will not necessarily provide any benefits to me. However, I may experience increased self-awareness and other personal insights that I may be able to use in my daily life.
- The recorded audiotapes and transcripts will be kept in the researcher's possession for five years. However, this information will not be used in any study without my written consent.
- I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences.

Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity:

You will remain anonymous. Your records will be kept private and confidential for five years, then they will be destroyed. Pseudonym identifiers will be used rather than your name on study records. Your name and other facts that might identify you will not appear when this study will be presented or published. If there is a video-recording of you, your face will be blurred.

You can contact my advisor Dr. Mitchell Kossak at mkossak@lesley.edu with any additional questions. You may also contact the Lesley University Human Subjects Committee Co-Chairs (see below). You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| _____ Date | _____ Researcher's Signature | _____ Print Name |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|

I am 18 years of age or older. The nature and purpose of this study have been satisfactorily explained to me and I agree to become a participant in the study as described above. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time if I choose so, and the researcher will gladly answer any questions that arise during the course of the study.

| | | |
|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| _____ Date | _____ Participant's Signature | _____ Print Name |
|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu



29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138, USA

Gönüllü Katılımcı İzin Belgesi

Sanat Aracılığıyla İfade Edilen Eşgörü Deneyimi

Araştırmacı: Şeyma Çavuşoğlu, Lesley Üniversitesi, Yaratıcı Sanatlar Bölümü, Doktora Öğrencisi

Baş Araştırmacı: Mitchell S. Kossak, Lesley Üniversitesi, Yaratıcı Sanatlar Bölümü, Doktora Programı Öğretim Görevlisi (Doçent)

Sanat aracılığıyla ifade edilen eşgörü deneyimini araştırmaya davetlisiniz. Bu çalışmanın amacı eşgörü anlayışını ve onu yaşantıya geçiriş sürecini derinleştirmek. Bu çalışma süresince, iki adet görüşmeye, yaratıcı bir süreçten geçmeye ve kapanış sergisine sanat işiniz ile katılmaya davet edileceksiniz.

İlk birebir görüşmenizde size sanat ve/veya yaratıcı sanat terapileri ile ilgili kişisel deneyimleriniz, geçmiş işleriniz, sanat yaratım süreci ile ilgili görüşleriniz, eşgörü nasıl algıladığınız ve deneyimlediğiniz sorulacak. İlk görüşme sonrası size otuz günlük bir yaratım süresi tanınacak. Bu süreçte, ilk görüşmenin sizde yaratacağı ilhamdan veya size eşgörü çağrıştıran başka bir ilham kaynağından yola çıkarak, seçtiğiniz sanat dalında/dallarında bir iş üretmeniz istenecek. Araştırmacı, ilk görüşmeden sonra haftada bir sizinle irtibata geçerek, olası sorularınızı yanıtlayacak. Bu süreçte arzu ederseniz bir günlük tutabilirsiniz. Günlük tutmayı tercih ederseniz, haftalık takip görüşmelerinde günlüğünüzden bölümler paylaşabilirsiniz. İlk görüşmenin bitiminden otuz gün sonra, araştırmacı sizi tekrar arayarak ikinci görüşme için randevulaşacak.

İkinci birebir görüşmede yaratıcı döneminizi nasıl deneyimlediğinize, ortaya çıkan işin size çağrıştırdıklarına ve güncel eşgörü algınıza dair sorular sorulacak. Eğer yaratıcı sanatlar terapistiyseniz, deneyimlerinizin alana potansiyel katkıları da konuşulacak. Her birebir görüşme 30 ila 45 dakika arası olarak planlanmaktadır. Görüşmeler sesli kayıt cihazı ile kayda alınacaktır.

Çalışmada sizin gibi başka katılımcılar da yer alacaktır. Tüm katılımcılar ile birebir görüşmeler tamamlandıktan sonra, araştırmacı sizi ve seçeceğiniz üç davetlinizi, samimi bir ortamda organize edilecek sergiye davet edecektir. Bu sergide sizin, diğer katılımcıların ve araştırmacının üreteceği işler sergilenecektir. Kullandığınız sanat dalına bağlı olarak, orijinal eserlerinizi, fotoğraflarını, canlı performansınızı ya da sesli/video kaydını sunabileceksiniz. Sergi mekan, ileri bir tarihte sizlere bildirilecektir. Tahmini zamanlama Mayıs 2019 olarak belirlenmiştir. Üreteceğiniz iş(ler) ve kapanış sergisi, seçtiğiniz sanat dalı göz önünde bulundurularak, orijinal eser halinde, fotoğrafı çekilerek, sesli ya da görsel olarak kayıt altına alınacaktır.

Ben _____, “Sanat Aracılığıyla İfade Edilen Eşgörü Deneyimi” adlı araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Anlıyorum ki:

- Bu çalışma süresince, eşgörü deneyimi ile ilgili iki adet birebir görüşmeye, yaratıcı bir süreçten geçmeye ve kapanış sergisine davet edileceğim.
- Sanat ve/veya yaratıcı sanatlar terapileri ile ilgili kişisel deneyimlerim sorulacak.
- Maneviyata bakışım ve onu yaşayışım ile ilgili sorular sorulacak.
- Yaratım sürecinde üreteceğim iş(ler) ile ilgili yorumlarım sorulacak.
- Bütün birebir görüşmeler sesli kayıt altına alınacak.
- Üreteceğim iş(ler) ve kapanış sergisi, seçtiğim sanat dalı göz önünde bulundurularak, orijinal eser halinde, fotoğraf ile, sesli ya da görsel olarak kayıt altına alınacak.
- Görüşme içerikleri ve alınan kayıtlar kişi adı belirtmeksizin, gizli tutulacak ve yalnızca süpervizyon, akademik sunum ve/veya yayın amaçları doğrultusunda kullanılacak.
- Bu çalışma bana fayda sağlayabilir de, sağlamayabilir de. Çalışma, bazı farkındalıklar geliştirmeme ve bunları günlük yaşamımda deneyimlememe vesile olabilir.
- Kayıtlar, beş yıl boyunca araştırmacının gözetiminde tutulacak. Ancak, benim yazılı iznim olmadan bilgilerim hiçbir yeni araştırmada kullanılamaz.
- Bu araştırmadan, hiçbir olumsuz sonuca maruz kalmadan, istediğim zaman çekilebilirim.

Gizlilik Politikası ve Anonim Kalma:

Bu çalışmaya katılımınız anonim olacak. Verileriniz gizli ve isimsiz olarak beş yıl süre ile saklanacak, daha sonra imha edilecek. Size ait bilgiler bir takma ad ile yayınlanacak. Kimliğinizi açık edebilecek herhangi bir özel bilgi paylaşılmayacak. Eğer bir video kaydında kimliğinizi belli edecek bir görüntü mevcut ise, bulanıklaştırılacak.

Herhangi bir sorunuz olduğunda, danışmanım Doçent Dr. Mitchell Kossak ile mkossak@lesley.edu adresinden irtibata geçebilirsiniz. Aynı zamanda arzu ederseniz Lesley Üniversitesi Araştırma Katılımcıları Komitesi ile de iletişime geçebilirsiniz. İletişim bilgileri en altta mevcuttur.

Bu formun bir kopyası size de teslim edilecektir.

Araştırmacının İmzası:

| | | |
|-------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Tarih | Araştırmacının imzası | Ad ve soyad |
|-------|-----------------------|-------------|

Katılımcının İmzası:

Ben, 18 yaşında veya üzeri bir yaşta olduğumu beyan ederim. Araştırma süreci ve içeriği kapsamlı olarak açıklanmıştır. Yukarıda belirtildiği şekilde bu araştırmada katılımcı olmayı kabul ediyorum. Anlıyorum ki, istediğim her an, araştırmadan çekilme hakkına sahibim, ve araştırmacı araştırma süresince, herhangi bir konuda oluşabilecek her türlü soruma cevap verecektir.

| | | |
|-------|---------------------|-------------|
| Tarih | Katılımcının imzası | Ad ve soyad |
|-------|---------------------|-------------|

Şikayetleriniz veya araştırma ile ilgili yaşadığınız sıkıntılar oluştuğunda Lesley Üniversitesi Araştırma Katılımcıları Komitesi ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz ve geçmelisiniz. İletişim bilgisi şu şekildedir: irb@lesley.edu



CONSENT TO USE AND/OR DISPLAY ART

CONSENT BETWEEN: Seyma Cavusoglu and

Researcher

Participant's Name

I _____, agree to allow Seyma Cavusoglu

Participant's name

Researcher

to use and/or display and/or photograph/audio or video record my artwork, for the following purposes:

- Reproduction and/or inclusion within the research currently being completed by the researcher.
- Reproduction and/or presentation at a professional conference or an academic presentation.
- Reproduction, presentation, and/or inclusion within academic assignments including but not limited to a doctoral work, currently being completed by the researcher.

It is my understanding that my name will not be revealed in any presentation or display of my artwork, unless waived below.

☐ I DO ☐ I DO NOT wish to remain anonymous.

This consent to use or display my artwork may be revoked by me at any time. I also understand I'll receive a copy of this consent form for my personal records.

Signature _____ Date _____
Participant's signature

I Seyma Cavusoglu, agree to the following conditions in connection with the use of artwork:

Researcher

I agree to keep your artwork safe to the best of my ability and to notify you immediately of any loss or damage while your art is in my possession. I agree to return your artwork immediately if you decide to withdraw your consent at any time.

Signature _____ Date _____
Researcher's signature

You can reach the researcher, Seyma Cavusoglu, at scavusog@lesley.edu



CONSENT TO USE AND/OR DISPLAY ART IN TURKISH

SANAT İŞİNİ KULLANMAYA VE/VEYA SERGİLEMEYE İLİŞKİN İZİN FORMU

Bu izin formu şu kişiler arasındadır: Seyma Cavusoglu ve

_____.

Araştırmacı

Katılımcı

Ben _____, Şeyma Çavuşoğlu'na
 Katılımcı Araştırmacı

aşağıda belirtilen amaçlar doğrultusunda sanat işimi kullanma, sergileme, fotoğraflama, sesli ya da video kaydı alma izni veriyorum:

- Güncel devam eden araştırma içerisinde kullanma, belgeleme, içeriğe dahil etme,
- Akademik bir kongrede sunum veya akademik içerikli bir başka ortamda sunum ve sergileme,
- Doktora süresince üretilen işlerde veya akademik içerikli başka işlerde içeriğe dahil etme, kullanma ve sunma.

Anlıyorum ki adım izin vermediğim sürece hiçbir sunumda veya paylaşımda yer almayacak.

Adımın geçmesine, izin veriyorum ☐ izin vermiyorum ☐

Sanat işimin kullanılması ve sergilenmesine dair verdiğim bu izni herhangi bir zaman geri çekebileceğimi anlıyorum. Ayrıca, bu izin belgesinin bir kopyasının bana teslim edileceğini anlıyorum.

İmza _____ Tarih _____
 Katılımcının İmzası

Ben Şeyma Çavuşoğlu, sanat işinin kullanım koşullarına dair aşağıda belirtilen şartları kabul

Araştırmacı

ediyorum:

İşi elimden gelen en iyi şekilde güvende tutacağım. İşin kaybolması veya zarar görmesi durumlarında hemen size haber vereceğim. Eğer bu kullanım iznini geri çekmeye karar vererseniz, işi size en kısa sürede geri teslim edeceğim.

İmza _____ Tarih _____
 Araştırmacının İmzası

Bana, Şeyma Çavuşoğlu, ulaşabileceğiniz e-posta adresim: scavusog@lesley.edu

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for the Research

First Interview

1. Witnessing previous artwork(s).
2. How do you identify yourself?
 - i. Age
 - ii. Gender
 - iii. Sexual Orientation
 - iv. Ethnicity
 - v. Social Class
 - vi. Profession
 1. How long have you been practicing?
 2. Education?
 3. Current work?
 - vii. Religion/Spiritual path/Any teachings/Contemplative practice
3. How do you define art?
4. What role has art and artmaking played in your life?
5. How do you think artmaking might affect your views/understanding?
6. What is your understanding of equanimity?
7. How do you think equanimity and art/artmaking might relate?
8. For creative arts therapists: How do you think Expressive Therapies/your modality might benefit from the practice of equanimity?
9. Give out the written statement form.

Second Interview

1. How was the creative period for you?
2. (After witnessing the artworks) Can you describe your artwork(s)?
3. Why this art form?
4. How (if any) did the artwork(s) influence you during the creative period and/or after?
5. What is your current understanding of equanimity?
6. How (if any) has the artmaking influenced your experience of equanimity?
7. For creative arts therapists: How do you think your experience with this artwork and research might inform your current practice?
8. For creative arts therapists: How do you think your experience with this artwork and research might inform the larger field of Expressive Therapies/your modality?
9. Give out the written statement form.

Interview Questions for the Research – in Turkish

İlk Görüşme

1. Eski sanat işleri ile ilintili sohbet.
2. Kendinizi nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz?
 - a. Yaş
 - b. Cinsiyet
 - c. Cinsel tercih
 - d. Etnik köken
 - e. Sosyal sınıf
 - f. Meslek
 - i. Ne zamandır bu mesleği icra ediyorsunuz?
 - ii. Eğitim?
 - iii. Şu anki işiniz/projeniz?
 - g. Din/Manevi yol/Öğreti/Meditatif pratiğiniz
3. Sanatı nasıl tanımlarsınız?
4. Sizce sanat ve sanat yaratımı hayatınızda nasıl bir rol oynar?
5. Sizce sanat yaratımı yaşama bakışınızı ve anlayışınızı nasıl etkiliyor olabilir?
6. Eşgörü anlayışınız nedir?
7. Sizce eşgörü ve sanat/sanat yaratımı arasında nasıl bir ilişki olabilir?
8. Yaratıcı sanatlar terapistlerine yönelik soru: Sizce Yaratıcı Sanatlar Terapileri/sizin alanınız eşgörü uygulamasından nasıl yararlanabilir?
9. Yazılı doldurulacak formu ver.

İkinci Görüşme

1. Yaratıcı dönem sizin için nasıl geçti?
2. (Sanat işlerine şahitlik edildikten sonra) Sanat işinizi/işlerinizi anlatır mısınız?
3. Neden bu sanat dalı?
4. Sizce bu sanat işi/işleri yaratıcı dönem boyunca veya sonrasında sizi nasıl etkilemiş olabilir(ler)?
5. Şu anki eşgörü anlayışınız nedir?
6. Sizce sanat yaratımı eşgörü deneyiminizi nasıl etkilemiş olabilir?
7. Yaratıcı sanatlar terapistlerine yönelik soru: Sizce bu sanat işi/işleri ve araştırma ile olan deneyiminiz şu anki pratiğinize/işinize nasıl bir katkı sağlayabilir?
8. Yaratıcı sanatlar terapistlerine yönelik soru: Sizce bu sanat işi/işleri ve araştırma ile olan deneyiminiz Yaratıcı Sanatlar Terapileri alanına/sizin alanınıza nasıl bir bilgi sunabilir?
9. Yazılı doldurulacak formu ver.

APPENDIX E
THE WRITTEN STATEMENT

Please consider if you currently experience equanimity in your life in relation to your artmaking, if so, describe how.

Lütfen günlük yaşamınızda, sanat yaratım süreciniz ile ilintili olarak eşgörü deneyimleyip deneyimlemediğinizi gözden geçiriniz. Eğer deneyimliyorsanız, bu deneyimi yazılı olarak tarif ediniz.

APPENDIX F**FEEDBACK FORMS FOR THE FINAL EXHIBITION**

Feedback Form for the Exhibition

Please write down three words that describe what the exhibition evoked in you:

Which artwork(s) stood out for you? Why?

What might be a catchword or catchphrase that you would use to describe the exhibition?

Feedback Form for the Exhibition – in Turkish

Lütfen serginin size çağrıştırdıklarını anlatan üç kelime yazınız:

Hangi sanat işi/işleri sizin için ön plana çıktı(lar)? Neden?

Sergiyi tanımlamak için kullanacağınız bir slogan (bir kelime ya da bir cümle) ne olabilir?

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